Conceptions of Place in Old English Poetry

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Abstract

Previous studies of place and space in Anglo-Saxon literature and culture have tended to focus on the engagement with these phenomena as a means of understanding the world and of imposing order on it. The analysis offered here scrutinises instead the literary representation and function of place in the vernacular poetic tradition, as well as its symbolic significance. In its examination of conceptions of place in Old English poetry, this thesis contends that place is fundamentally fleeting and symbolic of the transience of all earthly things.

The present study first assesses the role of the hall as the chief location for aristocratic human society, especially as manifested in the hall of Heorot. The attributes of this structure are closely linked to the features of homosocial life in the *comitatus*. However, the hall and life in the *comitatus* are, like the city and society depicted in *The Ruin*, revealed to be fleeting. Whilst this is an inescapable reality for human society, the transitory experience of place is also common to individuals exiled from human company, as exemplified in a number of more overtly elegiac poems. Yet this characteristic aspect of place is not always necessarily a negative thing, since, in certain verse saints' lives, places initially inhabited by demons and heathens are converted into Christian sites. Additionally, these locations take on particular salvific and narrative significations, demonstrating further the varied literary significance of place. Finally, the analysis examines the diverse manifestations of place in *Beowulf*. The dwelling of Grendel's mother inverts the familiar place of the hall, unsettling notions of human social space; the dragon's barrow evokes architectural features of Britain's Roman past to convey the passage of time; and despite memorialising the poem's hero, Beowulf's own burial mound stands as a monument to impermanence. Ultimately, in contrast to the eternal place of Heaven, earthly places are shown to be emblematic of the transience of all earthly things.

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Abbreviations

ANQ	*American Notes and Queries*
ASE	*Anglo-Saxon England*
ASPR	*The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*
Bosworth–Toller	Joseph Bosworth, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, ed. by T. Northcote Toller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), with Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary: Supplement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), and Alistair Campbell, *Enlarged Addenda and Corrigenda to the Supplement of An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972)
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
CSASE	Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England
DOE	*Dictionary of Old English: A to I Online*, ed. by Angus Cameron and others (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2018) <https://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doe/>
DOEC	*Dictionary of Old English Corpus*, ed. by Antonette diPaolo Healey, with John Price Wilkin and Xin Xiang (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2009) <https://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doecorpus/>
DOML	Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library
EETS	Early English Text Society
ES	*English Studies*
Gmc	Germanic
LSE	*Leeds Studies in English*
JEGP	*Journal of English and Germanic Philology*
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
MP	*Modern Philology*
NM	*Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*
NQ	*Notes and Queries*
ODan	Old Danish
OE	Old English
OFris	Old Frisian
OHG	Old High German
ON	Old Norse
OS	Old Saxon
P(W)Gmc	Proto-(West-)Germanic
PIE	Proto-Indo-European
PMLA	*Publications of the Modern Language Association*
RES	*Review of English Studies*
SN	*Studia Neophilologica*
SP	*Studies in Philology*
W-S	West-Saxon

List of Illustrations

Fig. 1 Drawings of reconstructed Lejre Hall by Holger Schmidt, from Holger Schmidt, 'Reconstruction of Lejre Hall', *Journal of Danish Archaeology*, 10 (1991), pp. 186–90 (https://doi.org/10.1080/0108464X.1991.10590061). Reproduced with kind permission.

Fig. 2 Diagram of outline of Lejre Hall by Niklas B. Nielsen and Catharina Oksen, Roskilde Museum, from Tom Christensen, *Lejre: syn og sagn* (Roskilde: Roskilde Museums Forlag, 1991), p. 39; repr. in 'Lejre: Fact and Fable', trans. by Faith Ingwersen, in *Beowulf and Lejre*, ed. by Niles, p. 44. Reproduced with kind permission.

Fig. 3 Cropped image of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11, p. ii (© Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, reproduced under CC-BY-NC 4.0: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

Fig. 4 Detail of upper register from Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11, p. 3 (© Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, reproduced under CC-BY-NC 4.0: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

Introduction
Place and Space in Old English Poetry

Eardas rume
meotud arærde for moncynne,
ælmihtig God
'Almighty God,
the creator, established for mankind
spacious regions'
—*Maxims I* 15b–17a[1]

Place is a defining feature of any culture, whether modern, medieval, ancient or prehistoric, a fact borne out by the strata of human settlement in England layered one on top of the other over the course of tens of millennia—what William Boyd has called the 'historical palimpsest' of the English landscape.[2] From the now crumbling remains of Hadrian's Wall at the northernmost limit of the Roman province of Britannia Inferior to St Michael's Tower atop Glastonbury Tor in Somerset, ancient places of historical significance are etched onto the English landscape, and they continue to fascinate and confound, inspire and perplex us. Nowhere, arguably, is this reality more keenly felt than at Stonehenge, Wiltshire, a site in a continual state of flux for the millennium and a half during which its Neolithic users repurposed and reimagined the place between c. 3000 BCE and c. 1500 BCE.[3] In the modern age, it has

[1] Note that throughout this thesis, all citations from Old English poems are taken from *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records: A Collective Edition*, ed. by George Philip Krapp and Elliott van Kirk Dobbie, 6 vols (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931–1953), with the exception of *Beowulf*, which is cited from *Klaeber's Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. by R.D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles, 4th edn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), and *Andreas*, which is cited from *Andreas: An Edition*, ed. by Richard North and Michael D.J. Bintley (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016). Abbreviations for the titles of individual poems, typically used for in-line citations and in footnotes, are those found in Bruce Mitchell, Christopher Ball, and Angus Cameron, 'Short Titles of Old English Texts', *ASE*, 4 (1975), 207–21, and 'Short Titles of Old English Texts: Addenda and Corrigenda', *ASE*, 8 (1979), 331–3. All translations of both Old English and Latin texts are my own, unless otherwise stated.
[2] William Boyd, 'Introduction', in W.G. Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape*, rev. edn (Beaminster: Little Toller Books, 2013), p. 9.
[3] For a concise, up-to-date overview, see Duncan Garrow and Neil Wilkin, *The World of Stonehenge* (London: British Museum Press, 2022).

become the focus of a fiercely contested debate pertaining both to access to the site itself and to transit between London and the South-West. However, as one archaeologist has recently argued, the A303 which runs past the stone circle at a closest approach of 165 metres is as much a part of the history of this place—and will one day be as much a part of its archaeology—as the standing stones for which Salisbury Plain is best known.[4]

Such a layered understanding of place resonates with how place is presented throughout the surviving 30,000 lines or so of surviving Old English poetry, in which place is defined not just by who lives where now, but also by who has lived there before. Of course, central to any medieval conception of place is that *this* place—Earth—is transient and in flux, whilst *that* place, the place which any good Christian seeks—Heaven—is eternal and unchanging. In a similar way, Stonehenge attests to the transience of all earthly things, be that the now weather-worn and vandalised megaliths of the stone circle itself, the long-vanished Neolithic culture(s) which erected and interacted with the stones, the British government's plans to unlawfully replace the stretch of the A303 with a two-mile-long tunnel,[5] or even the very idea of a 'pristine' ancient landscape, untampered with by twentieth- and twenty-first-century civil engineers. However, the transience of these things does not, in modern Britain, imply the existence of an eternal heavenly place that awaits us, if only because Christianity, according to the British Social Attitudes Survey, is no longer the dominant religion or philosophical outlook in the United Kingdom, accounting for only 38% of British people surveyed in 2018, in contrast with the 52% of people who declare that they belong to no religion.[6] This marks a fundamental shift compared with the understanding of place immanent in the vernacular poetry of Anglo-Saxon

[4] Dan Hicks, 'Archaeologist: the A303 is a crucial part of Stonehenge's setting', *The Conversation* (23 January 2017) <https://theconversation.com/archaeologist-the-a303-is-a-crucial-part-of-stonehenges-setting-71451> [accessed 30 January 2022].

[5] 'Stonehenge tunnel campaigners win court battle', *BBC News* (30 July 2021) <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-wiltshire-58024139> [accessed 30 January 2022].

[6] John Curtice and others, 'Religion', in *British Social Attitudes 36*, ed. by John Curtice and others (London: The National Centre for Social Research, 2019), pp. 17–44.

England. And although transience is a major theme which emerges from the readings in this thesis of the earthly places and spaces encountered in the Old English poetic corpus, place and space take on other kinds of narrative, symbolic and cultural significance.

As this would suggest, two key terms used throughout this thesis are ‘place’ and ‘space’, words which did not form part of the vernacular lexicon of spatiality in Anglo-Saxon England.[7] In Present Day English, the word ‘place’ primarily denotes ‘[a] particular part or region of space; a physical locality, a locale; a spot, a location’, and although it derives from the Old English *plæce*, its meanings in Old English were restricted to those of its Latin etymon *platea*, ‘street, open space’, a borrowing which was reinforced in the twelfth century by Anglo-Norman *plas* and Old French *place*, ‘place, area, public square’.[8] However, as a search of the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus* reveals, by far the most common generic terms for ‘place’ in Old English were *stow* (over 2,500 occurrences) and, less frequently, *stede* (over 400), which usually occurs as part of a compound in poetic texts.[9] But Old English had a far richer vocabulary of place than this, with often near-synonymous words for various kinds of place: alongside *stow* and *stede*, there are *stæl*, *staþol*, *steall*, *stoc*, all denoting ‘place, position, location’ or similar.[10] To these one could add such terms for dwellings, settlements, and cultivated places as *burh*, *ceaster*, *eard*, *eþel*, *fæsten*, *ham*, *hus*, *tun*, *wang*, and *wic*, as well as those for halls or other buildings, such as *bur*, *heal*(*l*), *hof*, *reced*, *sæl*, *sele*, and *træf*. This list says nothing, of course, of the similarly rich vocabulary of words for the naturally occurring topographical features found in different kinds of landscape, some of which will be encountered throughout the following chapters. Another key term used throughout this thesis,

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[7] Fabienne L. Michelet, *Creation, Migration, and Conquest: Imaginary Geography and Sense of Space in Old English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 19–21.

[8] *Anglo-Norman Dictionary*, ed. by Geert de Wilde and others, 2nd edn (2000–2006) [online] <https://anglo-norman.net/>, s.v. *place*; Bosworth–Toller, s.v. *plæce*; *OED*, s.v. *place*, n. 1.

[9] *DOEC*, s.v. *plæc-*, *stow*, *stede*.

[10] For these words, compounds derived from them, and related terms, see Jane Roberts, Christian Kay, and Lynne Grundy, eds, *A Thesaurus of Old English* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2017) <http://oldenglishthesaurus.arts.gla.ac.uk/> [accessed 16 November 2021].

‘space’, too has medieval origins, coming from Anglo-Norman *space* (itself from Latin *spatium*), which primarily denoted a duration of time.[11] This meaning is now largely obsolete in Present Day English; however, it is the word’s set of meanings ‘[d]enoting area or extension’, which obtains today. This may refer to ‘[l]inear distance’ and ‘[p]hysical extent or area’ or to space as in ‘the physical universe’, and space ‘regarded as an attribute of the universe, describable mathematically’.[12] Before the arrival in English of the word ‘space’, though, Old English had *rum*, a noun also denoting both ‘room, space’ and a ‘space of time’; as an adjective, the word similarly meant ‘roomy, spacious’ or, concerning time, ‘long, extended’. Alongside *rum*, Old English also had *bradnes*, ‘broadness, extent’, and *brad*, ‘broad, open, spacious’.[13] As will be seen in the following chapters, words such as *stow*, *stede*, *eþel*, *fæsten*, *wang* and *wic* occur frequently in descriptions of places in Old English poetry, especially earthly places inhabited by humans. What this brief lexical note highlights is a key conceptual distinction for how notions of spatiality were and are conveyed verbally: space as that which is expansive and immaterial, and place as that which is local and tangible, for in order to locate or to position something somewhere, one has to be able to perceive it. For the moment, though, it will suffice to say that on a foundational level, the concepts ‘place’ and ‘space’ existed in the Old English lexicon, and therefore must have existed in the minds of the Anglo-Saxons who used these words.[14] What precisely these concepts denote today and what they may have meant in the medieval past will be discussed further below, but it will be beneficial first to consider some examples of the kinds of places found in the Old English poetic corpus.

[11] *Anglo-Norman Dictionary*, s.v. espace, s. 1.
[12] *OED*, s.v. ‘space’, n. 1.
[13] Bosworth–Toller, s.v. *rum*, *brad*, *bradnes*.
[14] In the bilingual textual community which used these Old English words, one might also add, of course, Latin *locus*, *spatium*, etc.

The surviving body of Old English poetry is full of real-world places located both in England and beyond. The panegyric *The Battle of Brunanburh* commemorates Æthelstan's decisive victory at Brunanburh, 'Bruna's fortification', considered by many critics to be present-day Bromborough, on the Wirral, whilst *The Battle of Maldon* famously describes what happens when, *for his ofermode*, 'because of his pride' (*Mald* 89b), Byrhtnoth allows the Scandinavian marauders to cross the easily defended ford over the River Pante with disastrous consequences.[15] At the end of the period in which Old English poetry was composed, the city of Durham is fêted in the late *encomium urbis* which now bears the city's name as a place *breome geond Breotenrice*, 'famous throughout Britain' (*Dur* 1), and famous in particular for the churchmen who have graced the cathedral city. The many places of the Old Testament are found, naturally, throughout the Junius Manuscript in *Genesis*, *Exodus* and *Daniel*, whilst Cynewulf's *Elene* recounts St Helena's expedition from Rome to Jerusalem, two cities of critical importance, of course, in early Christendom. As significant as these places undoubtedly were for English and Christian salvation history, respectively, they are seen in Old English poetry only through a glass, darkly. Perhaps this was because the topography and characteristics of these places could be taken for granted: one only needed to know that Brunanburh must have been near enough to the coast, probably that of the Irish Sea, for the defeated Norse-Irish forces to flee back to Dublin, just as one could readily infer that Maldon too was on the coast. Similarly, as cornerstones of the geography of early Christendom, Rome and Jerusalem were household names, so to speak, with Rome a site of pilgrimage for those who were able to attempt the journey. And Durham the city mattered less, perhaps, than did Durham the resting place of Oswald, Cuthbert, Aidan, and Bede. This does not mean, of course,

[15] For discussion of the location of Brunanburh, see the onomastic essays in *The Battle of Brunanburh: A Casebook*, ed. by Michael Livingstone (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2011); for a comprehensive overview of the scholarship pertaining to the interpretation of *Mald* 89a, see Paul Cavill, 'Interpretation of *The Battle of Maldon*, Lines 84–90: A Review and Reassessment', *SN*, 67 (1995), 149–64. On the significance of space and place in these two poems, see Keri A. Wolf, 'Place, Space, and Identity in Six Old English Comitatus Poems' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California Davis, 2010), pp. 188–238.

that these places were not deemed worthy of more detailed description, only that their significance in the body of poetry which survives was due to their general geographical setting or to their history. The places uncovered in this thesis, in contrast, are notable not for their real-world importance *per se* but for the fact that they typically signify something else beyond their imagined physical appearances. Whilst most of the places examined here have some immediate narrative or other value, their deeper signification is that they typically stand, as already noted, for the transience of all earthly things, a major theme found in much of Old English literature.[16] In the early medieval Christian milieu of Anglo-Saxon England, such an understanding of place necessarily stands in contrast to the eternal joys of life in Heaven, the only place truly worth attaining.[17]

One of the clearest examples of the fleetingness of place is to be found in *The Whale*, a verse translation of the entry for the *aspidochelone* (*ἀσπιδοχελώνη*, 'asp-' or 'shield-turtle') in the Latin *Physiologus*.[18] According to the *Physiologus* tradition, this sea beast—an allegory for devils—lures sailors onto its island-like back which breaks above the surface of the sea. Sailors disembark onto this 'island', and when in the Old English rendering the whale senses *þæt him þa ferend on fæste wuniaþ, / wic weardiað*, 'that those travellers are dwelling securely on it, [that they] *inhabit the place*' (*Whale* 25–6a), the whale plunges beneath the waves, dragging the hapless mariners to their deaths. Indeed, the sea is construed both as a different type of place and in terms of the potentially fatal dangers of the sea: the sailors are displaced from their 'island' to the *deaðsele*, 'death-hall' or 'death-dwelling' (30a), of the deep. That this island might be some kind of maritime mirage is anticipated by the statement that unwary seafarers

[16] For a definitive account of transience in OE literature, see Christine Fell, 'Perceptions of Transience', in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. by Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 180–97.
[17] For a definitive account of eternity in OE literature, see Milton McC. Gatch, 'Perceptions of Eternity', in *The Cambridge Companion*, ed. Godden and Lapidge, pp. 198–213.
[18] On the *Physiologus*, and the related *Bestiary* tradition, see *Physiologus: A Medieval Book of Nature Lore*, trans. by Michael J. Curley (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979; repr. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. ix–xxxviii; and on the *aspidochelone*/whale, see pp. 45–6, 83–4.

moor their ships *to þam unlonde*, 'to that non-place' (14a), or, to borrow the name of Thomas More's better-known fictional island, 'to that utopia'. Like the republic of Utopia, this *unlond* is too good to be true. *Unlond* is one of four conspicuous instances of alliterating references to the place as a type of 'land', occurring exclusively in on-verses between lines 12 and 21 of *The Whale*—*ealond*, 'island' or 'land next to water' (12a, 21a), *unlond* (14a), and *eglond*, also 'island' (16a)[19]—in what would seem to be a deliberate piece of wordplay: that is, the assertion that this is a 'non-place' is juxtaposed very clearly with the fact that this is, or seems to be, a real place, an island. In a not dissimilar fashion, More played with the pair of opposing possible meanings of his own New Latin coinage, *Utopia*, from the Greek *τόπος*, 'place', and *οὐ*, 'not', the pronunciation of which in English resembled, and still resembles, *εὐ*-, 'good'.[20] The tension in *The Whale* between the desirable outward appearance of this place and the fact that appearances can be deceiving underpins the allegory of this piece: like the cunning whale, devils *drohtende / þurh dyrne meaht duguðe beswicað, / ond on teosu tyhtaþ tilra dæda*, 'acting through secret power, deceive the multitude, and entice [people] to the ruin of good deeds' (32b–4). Although this is quite a particular example of place in the Old English poetic corpus, what it underscores is that place is seldom just a location where things occur, but rather that it nearly always stands for something else. Indeed, it emerges that place in Old English poetry is itself fundamentally transitory, whether over the course of a single human lifetime, from one generation to another, or in the relentless march of Christian salvation history. The pursuit of eternal heavenly salvation, despite—or, indeed, because of—earthly transience, is in fact the theme of the closing lines of *The Whale*, which encourage the poem's audience *on þas hwilnan tid hælu secan / þæt we mid swa leofne in lofe motan / to widan feore wuldres neotan*, 'to seek salvation in this transitory age so that we, in praise, may enjoy glory for [the rest of our] lives

[19] See discussion in Chapter 4 concerning the distinction between and conflation of *ealond* and *ig-/eglond*.
[20] *OED*, s.v. *utopia* and *eutopia*. More puns on the dual meaning of 'U-' in Utopia in a meter prefaced to the 1518 edition of *De optimo reipublicae statu, deque nova insula Utopia*. See Thomas More, *The Utopia of Sir Thomas More*, ed. J.H. Lupton, trans. by Ralph Robynson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895), pp. xl, xciii.

with one so beloved (i.e. God)' (86–8). However, before exploring the transient and eternal qualities of different kinds of place in Old English poetry, it is necessary first to consider more closely what exactly is meant by 'place' and 'space' in contemporary usage and, by extension, in this thesis.

Theories of Place and Space

In a lecture given in 1967, Michel Foucault pronounced that, in contrast to the nineteenth century's concern with time and history, '[t]he present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space'.[21] With these words he formally ushered in the so-called 'spatial turn' in the Humanities and in Western culture more generally, a change in perspective which, according to Bertrand Westphal, was engendered by the rupture caused by the Second World War, which shattered the teleological—and therefore temporal—myth of eternal progress.[22] Such views of space and spatiality, however, are themselves couched in historical, perhaps even teleological, terms. Foucault contrasts '[t]he present epoch' with the nineteenth century, whilst Westphal uses not just a historical event but the most significant geopolitical realignment of the past century to account for a shift in the way in which humans, at least in Western society, view the world. Nevertheless, one cannot overlook the radical changes to the way in which society has experienced both space and place since the Second World War. Over the past century, space, as far as our lived experience of it is concerned, has been rapidly shrinking: with a global population today of some 7.7 billion people, and over 50 percent of humans now inhabiting

[21] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', *Diacritics*, 16 (1986), 22–27 (p. 22). For discussion of Foucault's interest in the relationship between space and power, see Robert R. Tally Jr, *Spatiality* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 119–28.

[22] Bertrand Westphal, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*, trans. by Robert R. Tally Jr (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 9–36. On the spatial turn more generally, see Tally, *Spatiality*, pp. 11–43; and Jo Guldi, 'What is the Spatial Turn?', *Spatial Humanities: A Project of the Institute for Enabling Geospatial Scholarship* (University of Virginia Library, 2011–) <https://spatial.scholarslab.org/spatial-turn/what-is-the-spatial-turn/> [accessed 23 October 2019].

urban areas, most of us share less space, concentrated in fewer places, with ever more people.[23] Technological developments have seen travel times slashed and the ability to venture beyond one's home place opened up to ever greater numbers of us.[24] Indeed, to cross the Atlantic in 1920 would have taken the best part of five days by boat, whereas a flight from London to New York a century later takes only eight hours, and took as little as only half that in the age of Concorde. And although it is in fact expanding exponentially, as described by the Hubble–Lemâitre Law, outer space has on the human scale been made smaller and brought ever closer to us by our ongoing exploration of it.[25] It is in these ways, then, that we may substantiate the claim that we are indeed living through 'the epoch of space'.

A landmark work in the study of space at the human scale, Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* advanced the idea that space is a cultural construct, which Lefebvre formulated in the maxim, '(Social) space is a (social) product'.[26] Lefebvre conceived of space in terms of three broad 'fields': the physical (consisting of 'nature, the Cosmos'), the mental (abstract, intellectual space), and—most importantly in Lefebvre's analysis—the social (that is, society itself).[27] For Lefebvre, these kinds of space map onto another 'conceptual triad', consisting of 'spatial practice' (social space and how it is produced), 'representations of space' (how space is conceptualised by a society), and 'representational spaces' (the lived experience of space); in other words, 'the perceived, the conceived, and the lived'.[28] With his concern for space as a social, rather than a mathematical or purely physical, construct, Lefebvre has since

[23] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019: Highlights* (New York: United Nations, 2019), p. 1, and *World Urbanization Prospects 2018: Highlights* (New York: United Nations, 2019), p. 1.
[24] Tally, *Spatiality*, pp. 14–15.
[25] To name but a few of the most significant missions, Apollo, Voyager, Cassini, New Horizons, Hubble, and now the James Webb Space Telescope—not to mention the International Space Station, permanently inhabited for over two decades now—have all played a considerable role in this regard. For a recent history of such missions, see Roger D. Launius, *The History of Space Exploration: Discoveries from the Ancient World to the Extraterrestrial Future* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2018).
[26] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991), p. 26, *et passim*.
[27] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 11.
[28] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, esp. pp. 30–46, at 33, 39.

influenced a number of human geographers such as Derek Gregory, Edward Soja and Doreen Massey, whose approaches to geography are concerned principally with the social aspects of our modern experience of spatiality, and the frequent resulting loss of place.[29] As Robert Tally neatly puts it, 'Displacement, perhaps more than a homely rootedness in place, underscores the critical importance of spatial relations in our attempts to interpret, and change, the world [today]'.[30] As Tally's remark suggests, to talk of spatiality is necessarily to talk also of place, and just as our relationship with space has undergone a period of radical change in recent decades, so too, inevitably, has our relationship with place.

Although space and place constitute two sides of the same coin—that coin being 'spatiality'—Lefebvre and his followers asserted the priority of (non-Euclidean) space, whilst a number of other human geographers have affirmed that space and place are either of equal weight or even that place is the more salient of the two concepts in the everyday experience of most humans.[31] Typically, such thinkers view space as a more abstract concept, as a container in which places arise from the accretion of meaning at particular points: Yi-Fu Tuan, for example, suggests that space 'is transformed into place as it acquires definition and meaning'.[32] However, in Tally's assessment, '[t]he view of space as a "container" in which things are situated, the mere "relation" between things, or as a "subjective" condition of perception tends to diminish the importance of spatiality'.[33] Even so, the importance of human-ascribed meaning

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[29] See Derek Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, 2nd edn (London: Verso, 2011); and Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE, 2005), who refers to such questions as 'aspatial globalisation' and 'the elusiveness of place'. For an overview of these and other twentieth-century thinkers, see Tally, *Spatiality*, pp. 112–45.
[30] Tally, *Spatiality*, p. 13. On the issue of displacement, see especially Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-world*, 2nd edn, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), pp. 22–39; and Edward C. Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, 1976).
[31] Tim Cresswell, *Place: An Introduction*, 2nd edn (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), pp. 1–22; Fred Lukermann, 'Geography as a Formal Intellectual Discipline and the Way in which it Contributes to Human Knowledge', *Canadian Geographer*, 8 (1964), 167–72 (p. 168); Relph, p. 1; and Yi-Fu Tuan, *Place and Space: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), pp. 3–7.
[32] Tuan, p. 136; cf. Cresswell, pp. 14–15; Lukermann, p. 169; and Westphal, *Geocriticism*, p. 5.
[33] Tally, p. 29. Unfortunately, though, Tally offers no alternate view of space which might augment 'the importance of spatiality' that he refers to.

in the construction of place is emphasised by Fred Lukermann, Edward Relph, and, most recently, Tim Cresswell, for whom place is, at its simplest, 'a meaningful location'.[34] And yet, according to Tuan, space and place participate in a symbiotic relationship, in which place is both located in space and derived from it, and in which, inversely, the same is true—space is made up of places and the distances between them.[35] Unlike space, however, places are distinctive, whether topographically, architecturally, biologically, or demographically, and can be defined and demarcated within the wider space which surrounds, or contains, them. Following Lukermann, Relph, for instance, identifies six defining features of place: as a location which exists in relation to other places; as somewhere which incorporates both 'nature' and 'culture'; as part of 'a system of spatial interactions'; as 'localised' entities or 'focuses' within a wider space; as something which is 'emerging or becoming', that is, which has a history; and, most significantly, as something imbued with meaning.[36] If these characteristics feel intuitively correct, that is surely because to the modern reader they are just that: intuitive. We all have an instinctive sense of what place is because it is a fundamental, if often overlooked, aspect of our day-to-day existence. Or, as philosopher of place Edward Casey expresses this idea, 'place is an a priori of our existence on earth' for 'we are implaced beings'.[37]

In his philosophical survey of place, Casey traces this concept's history, in Western thought at least, from its earliest treatment in the fourth century BCE by Archytas and Aristotle, through the Neoplatonist Simplicius's commentaries on Aristotle in the sixth century CE. There is then an apparent silence on the matter lasting over a thousand years, before the appearance in the eighteenth century of the writings of Immanuel Kant, and subsequently in the past two

[34] Lukermann, p. 169; Relph, p. 3; Cresswell, p. 12.
[35] Tuan, p. 6.
[36] Relph, p. 3.
[37] Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. x.

centuries, of Edmund Husserl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Martin Heidegger.[38] For Aristotle, place was 'a bounding container' with 'the power to make things be *somewhere*' and without which 'things would not only fail to be located; they would not even be *things*: they would have *no place to be the things they are*'; similarly, for Archytas, as quoted by Simplicius, place 'is the first of all things'.[39] Simplicius himself reprised this way of viewing place in his *In Aristotelis categorias commentarium*, but it was not until Kant, by Casey's reckoning, that place reassumed priority again in Western philosophy: according to Kant, 'whatever exists, is somewhere' and 'whatever is somewhere, exists'.[40] Crucially, Kant recognised 'that between body and place there is a spatial bond', such that the world and a given object's characteristics 'are known to us only in and by the body that enters and occupies a given place'.[41] The notion that place can only be experienced bodily—which is to say through the senses—was one subsequently taken up in particular by twentieth-century phenomenologists.[42] Although Husserl devoted much of his attention to the question of time, Merleau-Ponty, who was strongly influenced by Husserl, asserted in his *Phenomenology of Perception* the importance of the spatialised body as the means by which we experience the world: 'Spatial existence […] is the primordial condition of every living perception.'[43] Finally, although fellow phenomenologist Martin Heidegger engaged with notions of place and space, they are less detectable in his 'imposing' *Being and Time*, which, as its title suggests, prioritises time over

[38] Casey, *Fate of Place*, pp. 50–102, 202–84.
[39] Casey, *Fate of Place*, p. 71 (emphasis original); *The Concept of Place in Late Neoplatonism: Texts with Translation, Introduction and Notes*, ed. and trans. by Samuel Sambursky (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1982), p. 37.
[40] Kant, 'Inaugural Dissertation', in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Kant: Theoretical Philosophy, 1755–1770*, ed. and trans. by David Walford, with Ralf Meerbote (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 408; Casey, *Fate of Place*, pp. 202–10.
[41] Casey, *Fate of Place*, p. 204.
[42] On the importance of 'embodied implacement' in our experience of place, see Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, pp. 41–105; and Tuan, pp. 8–18, 34–50; and Dan Zahavi, *Phenomenology: The Basics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), pp. 73–86.
[43] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Donald A. Landes, rev. edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), p. 112.

spatiality.[44] Nonetheless, like that of Kant before him, Heidegger's understanding of our being—what he termed 'Being-in-the-world' ('In-der-Welt-sein')—is predicated on our being located *somewhere*; indeed, 'Being-in-the-world' is, Heidegger asserts, 'constitutive for knowing the world'.[45]

Paraphrasing these philosophers, Casey has elsewhere asserted the priority of place over space, stating emphatically, 'To be in the world, to be situated at all, is to be in place'.[46] Rejecting the primacy of space that supposedly obtained during the interregnum between Simplicius and Kant, Casey has insisted that 'place is no empty substratum [of space and time] to which cultural predicates come to be attached; it is an already plenary presence permeated with culturally constituted institutions and practices'; or, put another way, 'places not only *are*, they *happen*'.[47] Without emplaced bodies which move in and through place, and around and because of which culture happens (or *takes place*), it is not possible to speak of place. And since the human experience of the world involves movement and interactions between people and peoples *in situ*—in a word, culture—we are, as Casey insists, 'ineluctably place-bound'.[48] Likewise, for fellow philosopher of place, Jeff Malpas, 'place *is integral to the very structure and possibility of experience*' and not 'something only encountered "in" experience'—in other words, place is constitutive not just for knowing the world, but for human experience in general. Malpas's central contention in his work is that 'Place is […] that within and with

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[44] Casey, *Fate of Place*, p. 286; on Heidegger, see esp. pp. 243–84.
[45] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) pp. 78–90, at 90. Another of Heidegger's important concepts, 'Dasein' (literally 'Being-there'), also points deictically to the spatial essence of being. For accessible accounts of Heidegger's thinking on space and place, see David R. Cerbone, 'Heidegger on Space and Spatiality', in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger's Being and Time*, ed. by Mark A. Wrathall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 129–44; and Gjermund Wollan, 'Heidegger's Philosophy of Space and Place', *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift*, 57 (2003), 31–9.
[46] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, p. xv.
[47] Edward S. Casey, 'How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena', in *Senses of Place*, ed. by Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1996), pp. 46, 27. On this purported interregnum, see Casey, *Fate of Place*, pp. 103–29.
[48] Casey, 'How to Get from Space to Place', p. 19.

respect to which subjectivity is itself established'.[49] Malpas views place, then, as essential not only to our being but to our very subjectivity in relation to the world around us. Without the cultural practices that Casey refers to, or the spatially constituted nature of subjectivity, place becomes, in Malpas's words, 'an increasingly abstracted sense of *space*'.[50] Here, Malpas reinforces the notion of space as an abstraction, which exists in marked contrast to place, which is in turn, as both Casey and Malpas both contend, concrete and tangible. Casey and Malpas clearly assert the primacy of place in human experience, but the notion that space predominated as the more important concept of the two in the time which elapsed between Simplicius and Kant—that is, during a period including the early Middle Ages—will be fundamentally challenged by the analysis put forward in this thesis.

Before examining how modern critics have understood how spatiality was conceived of in medieval and in particular Old English literature, it is worth considering, lastly, what effect the spatial turn has had on the understanding of spatiality in literary studies more generally. Following on from mid-twentieth-century manifestations of the literary spatial turn *avant la lettre* in the work of writers such as Foucault, Gaston Bachelard, and Georges Perec, spatial approaches have continued to make in-roads into literary studies, culminating in a form of literary analysis which Tally and Westphal call 'geocriticism'.[51] In his survey of spatiality in literary studies, Tally has advocated 'a spatially oriented reading of literature', which not only 'focuses attention on space and spatiality in the texts under consideration' but also 'pay[s] attention to the changing spatial or geographical formations that affect literary and cultural productions'.[52] According to Westphal, geocriticism is the study of a given place as represented

[49] Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*, 2nd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), pp. 31, 34 (emphasis original).
[50] Malpas, *Place and Experience*, p. 173 (emphasis original).
[51] See Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces'; Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. by Maria Jolas (London: Penguin, 1964; repr. 2014); Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, trans. by John Sturrock, rev. edn (London: Penguin, 2008).
[52] Tally, *Spatiality*, pp. 80–1.

in literature and other cultural productions in order to obtain a diachronic, global view of how that particular place has occupied the (literary) imagination of the people who have inhabited it, visited it or simply looked at it from afar.[53] Although he is more inclusive than Westphal in his understanding of what this critical practice looks like, Tally too maintains that 'geocriticism allows us to understand "real" places by understanding their fundamental fictionality. And vice versa, of course.'[54] These spatial correspondences between the real and the fictional are what Westphal terms 'referentiality', namely, 'the relations between reality and fiction, between the spaces of the world and the spaces in the text'.[55] Such places, though, need not necessarily exist in the 'real' world—though they may well intersect with real-world places—occupying a purely 'imaginative geography', to borrow Edward Said's perhaps better-known phrase.[56] In Westphal's form of geocritical analysis, the geocritic should take into consideration diverse points of view, the full range of the senses, multiple layers of time, and intertextual relationships pertinent to a given place.[57] However, where this global view of literary spatiality inherent to Westphal's geocriticism is perhaps overly abstract, Neal Alexander quite rightly affirms the importance of analysing the more immediately tangible: 'close reading [of texts] remains essential as a means of examining the worked texture of place in literary representations, of moving beyond a concern with content to a consideration of how space and landscape are mediated by the text's language and form'.[58] Indeed, a global, multifaceted view of a given place is seldom available to the critic of early medieval literature, so it is only by

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[53] Westphal, *Geocriticism*, pp. 1–8. For a concise and clear statement on what geocriticism entails, see Bertrand Westphal, 'Foreword', in *Geocritical Explorations: Space, Place, and Mapping in Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. by Robert T. Tally Jr (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. ix–xv, esp. xiii–xv; and for a more expansive definition of the practice, see Tally, *Spatiality*, pp. 112–45.
[54] Robert Tally Jr, 'Translator's Preface: The Timely Emergence of Geocriticism', in Westphal, *Geocriticism*, p. x. See also Tally, 'Introduction: On Geocriticism', in *Geocritical Explorations*, pp. 1–12, and *Spatiality*, pp. 140–5.
[55] Westphal, *Geocriticism*, p. 6.
[56] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1991; repr. 2019), pp. 49–72.
[57] Westphal, *Geocriticism*, pp. 111–47.
[58] Neal Alexander, review of Bertrand Westphal, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* (2011), *Textual Practice*, 25 (2011), 1113–16 (p. 1116).

marshalling detailed textual evidence through close readings of individual representations of places that we can hope to understand what those places might have signified to the people who wrote, read and heard about them. As such, this is the principal methodology adopted in this thesis, but how other medievalists have approached such representations of place is the subject of the remainder of this discussion.

Place and Space in the Middle Ages

For the past two decades, the effects of the spatial turn have become increasingly felt across a variety of fields in medieval studies and especially at the intersections where these different fields meet.[59] In addition to more overtly interdisciplinary endeavours, some critics have trained their focus on particular kinds of place and space: sacred and secular, urban and rural.[60] As Meg Boulton has noted, however, there has as yet been no systematic study of the conceptual understanding of space and place in the Western medieval world, leading her to articulate this important caveat:

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[59] See, for instance, such interdisciplinary edited volumes as *Medieval Practices of Space*, ed. by Barbara A. Hanawalt and Michal Kobialka (Minneapolis, MI: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); *Inventing Medieval Landscapes: Senses of Place in Western Europe*, ed. by John Howe and Michael Wolfe (Gainsville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2002); *Place, Space, and Landscape in Medieval Narrative*, ed. by Laura L. Howes (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2007); *Locating the Middle Ages: The Spaces and Places of Medieval Culture*, ed. by Julian Weiss and Sarah Salih (London: King's College London, 2012); *Space in the Medieval West: Places, Territories, and Imagined Geographies*, ed. by Meredith Cohen and Fanny Madeline (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014); and *Place and Space in the Medieval World*, ed. by Meg Boulton, Jane Hawkes and Heidi Stoner (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020). For general overviews, see Meg Boulton, 'Introduction: Place and Space', in *Place and Space in the Medieval World*, ed. by Boulton, Hawkes and Stoner, pp. xv–xxv; and Meredith Cohen, Fanny Madeline, and Dominique Iogna-Prat, 'Introduction', in *Space in the Medieval West*, ed. by Cohen and Madeline, pp. 1–17.

[60] Helen Gittos, *Liturgy, Architecture, and Sacred Places in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Sarah Semple, 'Sacred Spaces and Places in Pre-Christian and Conversion Period Anglo-Saxon England', in *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, ed. by Helena F. Hamerow, David Alban, and Sally Crawford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 742–63; Laura Varnam, *The Church as Sacred Space in Middle English Literature and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018); *Urban Space in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age*, ed. by Albrecht Classen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009); and *Rural Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: The Spatial Turn in Premodern Studies*, ed. by Albrecht Classen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012).

> Space and place, in the context of this discussion, are not simple, are not 'givens', as we cannot blindly transpose our modern ideas about them onto a medieval context, but rather are required to undertake an extended engagement with the objects and spaces of the period in order to bridge the possible understandings between our relationship with these ideas and those posited for space and place in the medieval world.[61]

The risk of anachronism is, of course, an ever-present one in the study of the distant past, and Boulton's words are a timely reminder of this fact. Whilst one cannot take an appreciation of space and place in the Middle Ages for granted, equally this does not preclude the possibility that space and place were concepts which enjoyed intellectual currency throughout, or at particular moments during, that period. Indeed, Christian thinkers in late Antiquity and the early medieval period frequently utilised the language of place in order to convey central aspects of Christian thought: Augustine's *De civitate Dei* distinguished between the transient place of the Earthly City and that of the eternal, heavenly City of God;[62] in Book 14 of his *Etymologiae* (*De terra et partibus*), Isidore of Seville surveys 'the world and its parts', ordering the terrestrial space of God's Creation from the global level, through the regional, to the national and the local;[63] Bede's biblical exegesis frequently exploited symbolic places found in the books of the Old Testament, such as the Tabernacle;[64] in his lament for the sack of Lindisfarne, *De rerum humanarum vicissitudine et clade Lindisfarnensis monasterii*, Alcuin alludes to the fall of other places such as Babylon, Rome and the First Temple, ultimately to

[61] Boulton, p. xvii.
[62] Especially Part II (Books 11–12). For discussion of the two cities, see Gerard O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God: A Reader's Guide*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 57–71, 189–224.
[63] Isidore of Seville, *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, ed. by W.M. Lindsay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), II: *Libros XI–XX continens*, XIV.i–ix, translated in *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. by Stephen A. Barney and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 285–300.
[64] Such as the tabernacle in Exodus 24:12–30 (in Bede's *De tabernaculo*), Solomon's temple in 1 Kings (earlier 3 Kings) 5:1–7:51 (*De templo*), and the Second Temple in Ezra and Nehemiah (*In Esram et Neemiam*). For text and discussion, respectively, see Bede, *Opera exegetica*, ed. by C.W. Jones and others, 7 vols, CCSL 118A–121A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1962–2001), IIa: *De tabernaculo, De templo, In Ezram et Neemiam*, ed. by D. Hurst, CCSL, 119A (1969); and Jennifer O'Reilly, 'Introduction', in Bede, *On the Temple*, trans. by Seán Connolly, with Jennifer O'Reilly, Translated Texts for Historians, 21 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995), pp. xvii–xxviii.

offer the consolation that the brothers slain by Norse marauders in AD 793 will live a better life with the community of God and his angels;[65] and the preface to the Alfredian translation of Augustine's *Soliloquies* employs the imagery of building a homestead, piece by piece, as a metaphor for collecting in one place the knowledge imparted by the Church Fathers.[66] Nonetheless, in contrast to Casey's assertion that space triumphed over place during the medieval period, some critics have claimed a 'lack of stability of concepts of space in the Middle Ages' and even that there was 'no such thing as "space" for medieval people […] which is a postmedieval category'.[67] However, supposed absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, and it now seems, in light of the profusion of research into space and place in medieval culture in the two decades since these comments were made, that such generalisations were premature. The growing body of scholarship produced over the last twenty years has affirmed that both space and place were indeed meaningful concepts in the medieval period. Where it is right to be cautious, though, is in assuming that medieval understandings of these concepts were necessarily like our own.[68]

Naturally, since even the Western European Middle Ages spanned a millennium and Latin Christendom a vast geographical expanse, understandings of space and place would have varied to a greater or lesser extent throughout time and across different regions during the medieval period.[69] As this thesis is concerned with the vernacular literary writings from Anglo-

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[65] Alcuin, 'Alcuini (Albini) Carmina', in *Poetae latini aevi Carolini*, ed. by Ernst Dümmler and others, 4 vols, MGH (Berlin: Weidmann, 1881–1923), I, ed. by Ernst Dümmler (1881), pp. 239–35; translated in *Sources and Analogues of Old English Poetry: The Major Latin Texts in Translation*, trans. by Daniel G. Calder and Michael J.B. Allen (Cambridge: Brewer, 1976), pp. 141–6.

[66] *King Alfred's Version of St. Augustine's Soliloquies*, ed. by Thomas A. Carnicelli (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 47; translated in *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources*, trans. by Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge (London: Penguin, 1983), pp. 138–9.

[67] Barbara A. Hanawalt, and Michal Kobialka, 'Introduction', in *Medieval Practices of Space*, ed. by Hanawalt and Kobialka, p. xvi; and Michael Camille, 'Signs of the City: Place, Power, and Public Fantasy in Medieval Paris', in *Medieval Practices of Space*, ed. by Hanawalt and Kobialka, p. 9. The duality between space and place is also upheld by Laura Howes, 'Introduction', in *Place, Space, and Landscape*, ed. Howes, p. viii.

[68] Boulton, p. xxi.

[69] An early attempt to uncover 'microspatial knowledge' of certain areas across Western Europe during the High Middle Ages is Dick Harrison, *Medieval Space: The Extent of Microspatial Knowledge in Western Europe During the Middle Ages*, Lund Studies in International History, 34 (Lund: Lund University Press, 1996).

Saxon England, inevitably any conclusions drawn are linguistically, culturally and temporally contingent. However, whilst the findings presented here are limited in time and space, they may at least gesture towards understandings of space and place elsewhere (and 'elsewhen') in the Middle Ages.[70] As with medieval studies more generally, Old English literary studies have in recent years embraced the spatial turn, resulting in a number of monographs, journal articles, contributions to edited volumes, and doctoral theses.[71] Where these more recent studies explicitly engage with questions of space and place, much of the treatment of these concepts in Anglo-Saxon England, particularly in history, landscape history, archaeology and onomastics, has been concerned less with 'space' and 'place' as conceptual abstractions than it has with specific real-world spaces and places. Place-name studies are necessarily preoccupied with real-world locations, and much has been and continues to be done to uncover not just the etymology but the cultural and historical significance of individual place-names in England, the majority of which have Anglo-Saxon origins.[72] Complementing the work of place-name scholars, archaeologists and landscape historians have shed considerable light on the material reality of the spaces and places that made up what we conveniently call 'Anglo-Saxon England'.[73] And finally, many historians of Anglo-Saxon England concerned with space

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[70] Henceforth, for the sake of convenience, any mention of the 'Middle Ages' or the '(early) medieval period' refers only to Western Latin Christendom.

[71] For more substantial contributions, see Ioana Alexandra Bolintineanu, 'Towards A Poetics of Marvelous Spaces in Old and Middle English Narrative' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Toronto, 2012); Nicole Guenther Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces: Anglo-Saxon Constructions of Place*, Toronto Anglo-Saxon Series, 23 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017); Jill Fitzgerald, *Rebel Angels: Space and Sovereignty in Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019); Lori Ann Garner, *Structuring Spaces: Oral Poetics and Architecture in Early Medieval England* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011); Nicholas Howe, *Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England: Essays in Cultural Geography* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008); Michelet, *Creation, Migration, and Conquest*; Andrew Scheil, 'Space and Place', in *A Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Studies*, ed. by Jacqueline Stodnick and Renée Trilling (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2012), pp. 197–214; and Wolf, 'Place, Space, and Identity'.

[72] See, for instance, the county-specific studies in the English Place-Name Society's monumental, and ongoing, Survey of English Place-Names, 96 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1924—), and the associated *Journal of the English Place-Name Society*. For discussion of the cultural, historical, and geographical significance of such place-names, see the contributions in *Perceptions of Place: Twenty-first-century Interpretations of English Place-name Studies*, ed. by Jayne Carroll and David N. Parsons (Nottingham: English Place-Name Society, 2013); and *Sense of Place in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Richard Jones and Sarah Semple (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2012).

[73] John Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018); Della Hooke, *The Landscape of Anglo-Saxon England* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1998); *The Landscape*

and spatiality have dwelt on the question of how the Anglo-Saxons may have situated themselves geographically in relation to the rest of Europe and temporally in terms of their own migration myth from Continental Europe to the island of Britain, especially as reflected in historiographical writings such as Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*.[74] The approaches to space and place afforded by these disciplines permit modern commentators to view, to varying degrees, the everyday lived experience of people in different social strata in Anglo-Saxon England. But what of the imaginative and ideological understanding of space and place which prevailed amongst the admittedly more learned members of Anglo-Saxon society? Here it is necessary to consider the fruits of recent literary critical approaches to Old English writing, whilst also recognising that there is much overlap between literary studies and the disciplines surveyed above.

In her study of the Anglo-Saxons' 'imaginary geography and sense of space', Fabienne Michelet is concerned chiefly with space as a cultural and mental construct—what she, following Jacques le Goff, calls the 'spatial *imaginaire*'—and the ways in which it informs ideas about creation, migration and conquest, the principal conceptual focuses of her work.[75] Michelet suggests that the 'mental map' of Anglo-Saxon writers enabled them to establish distances, demarcate frontiers, consolidate identities, engage in the 'othering' of exogenous

Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England, ed. by Nicholas J. Higham and Martin J. Ryan (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010); Oliver Rackham, *The History of the Countryside*, rev. edn (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2020), and 'The Medieval Countryside of England: Botany and Archaeology', in *Inventing Medieval Landscapes*, ed. by Howe and Wolfe, pp. 13–32; and the articles in Parts II and VI of *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, ed. by Helena Hamerow, David A. Hinton, and Sally Crawford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 119–220, 503–624, on rural and urban space, respectively.

[74] Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, pp. 56–139; Sarah Foot, 'Mental Maps: Sense of Place in Medieval British Historical Writing', in *Medieval Historical Writing: Britain and Ireland, 500–1500*, ed. by Jennifer Jahner, Emily Steiner, and Elizabeth M. Tyler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 139–56; Christopher Grocock, 'The Sense (or Absence) of Place in Bede', in *The Anglo-Saxons: The World Through Their Eyes*, ed. by Gale R. Owen-Crocker and Brian W. Schneider (Oxford: BAR Publishing, 2014), pp. 23–31; Nicholas Howe, 'An Angle on This Earth: Senses of Place in Anglo-Saxon England', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 82 (2000), 3–27, *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), and *Writing the Map*, 75–148; and Michelet, *Creation, Migration, and Conquest*, 115–60, 235–69.

[75] Michelet, *Creation, Migration, Conquest*, pp. viii, 8, et passim; Jacques le Goff, *L'Imaginaire médiéval* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), p. ii.

groups, and set down spatial knowledge and narratives as a way of asserting spatial control.[76] Key to this intellectual and imaginative endeavour are the policing of boundaries and of notions of the centre, whether in learned historical and geographical writings or in more overtly literary texts. Michelet's work builds on that of Nicholas Howe, whose own thinking about space and place culminated in his collection of 'essays in cultural geography', which underscores the importance of the act of writing about place in Anglo-Saxon conceptions of place.[77] Howe, too, exploits the image of metaphorically 'mapping' spaces, whether 'the literal and abstract, the immediate and the distant', and he explores the interface between geographical and imaginative conceptualisations of space and place.[78] Indeed, what Howe concludes of Anglo-Saxon charters is, as this thesis will also assert, equally applicable to Old English writings more generally: 'They placed the topographically local within the religiously eternal.'[79] More recently, Nicole Discenza has also argued that through the written word the Anglo-Saxons created place, not just mentally but also materially, and established the limits of human spatial control within the order of God's Creation.[80] In terms of the distinction between space and place, Discenza asserts that the Anglo-Saxons 'took abstract *space* and made *places* within it', places which 'are always inhabited' by someone or something, a fact which will be borne out by the close readings of individual places in the following chapters.[81] Like Michelet and Howe, Discenza examines the bigger picture, as it were, incorporating learned historical, geographical and religious writing into her analysis, alongside a number of poetic texts.

In contrast with the more global view taken by these critics, Lori Ann Garner looks only at Old English poetry in her study of architectural space, in which she contends, sometimes

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[76] Michelet, *Creation, Migration, Conquest*, pp. 8–31.
[77] Howe, *Writing the Map*.
[78] Howe, *Writing the Map*, pp. 1–9, at 3.
[79] Howe, *Writing the Map*, p. 26.
[80] Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, pp. 5–9.
[81] Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, pp. 12, 220 (emphasis original). It is perhaps necessary to clarify that places either are inhabited at the moment in which they are described or they *have been* inhabited at some point in the past.

more, sometimes less successfully, that Old English poetics reflect Anglo-Saxon building practices.[82] Her concern is less with space *qua* space than it is with representations both of the built environment and of the human experience of that environment. Nevertheless, Garner's focused approach to a particular kind of space as represented in a particular form of writing allows for a more probing discussion of the spaces and places which she analyses. In another focused treatment of a particular kind of space, Jill Fitzgerald has recently explored the relationship between space and sovereignty in Old English narratives of the Fall of the rebel angels. Noting the abundance of terms pertaining to space in such narratives in diverse forms of Old English writing, Fitzgerald suggests that the spatial dimension of the Fall 'offered Anglo-Saxon authors one way to establish their sense of place and order in the world', especially in relation to 'the perfect space of heaven' which they sought.[83] In her examination of 'marvelous spaces' in Old and Middle English literature, Ioana Bolintineanu identifies such spaces as 'places of wonder and dread' which are situated 'metaphysically between the world of living mortals and the world of the afterlife'.[84] These spaces include the places of the afterlife itself (especially Hell), the Otherworld in the Middle English tradition, and earthly landscapes as spaces of exile. What unites these kinds of space is what Bolintineanu calls 'spatial indeterminacy', namely, 'the inherent spatial mysteriousness and instability of marvelous places'.[85] Central to her understanding of marvellous spaces and places is the affective power that they have over the audiences of the narratives in which they appear. Finally, Keri Wolf examines the principal locus of human social space in Old English poetry, the *comitatus*, as it is depicted in just six '"comitatus" poems'. This form of homosocial space is localised in the hall, a central place frequently alluded to even when it does not explicitly appear in some Old English poems, as will also be seen in this thesis. For Wolf, the place of the *comitatus*, the hall,

[82] Garner, *Structuring Spaces*, pp. 3–20.
[83] Fitzgerald, *Rebel Angels*, pp. 10–18, at 11–12.
[84] Bolintineanu, 'Marvelous Spaces', p. ii.
[85] Bolintineanu, 'Marvelous Spaces', pp. 17–21, at 18.

is central to that group's collective identity, since physical features of that place (such as the mead-bench) and actions undertaken there (such as making oaths) are directly associated with the people who occupy it, namely a lord and his retainers. Even when the *comitatus* is situated beyond the walls of the hall, as in *The Battle of Maldon*, the group identity is preserved.[86] Defining place and space, then, is a way of imposing order on the world, and this process of ordering the world in spatial terms is enacted through different strategies: recounting narratives about conquest and migration, mentally 'mapping' space, representing the inhabitation of space by humans and other beings, depicting architectural or lived spaces, presenting cosmological narratives situated within Christian salvation history, envisioning 'marvellous' spaces and places, and framing conceptually central places through the social interactions which take place within them. What all of the above studies of different types of space and place in Old English literature have in common is that spaces and places are social, cultural constructs defined as much by the people who move through and reside in them as by their physical characteristics.

Scope of this thesis

In what follows, I have not sought to challenge or counter the findings of the above studies, which offer compelling insights into some of the various ways in which notions of place and space were understood in Anglo-Saxon England. Rather, I offer a fresh perspective on the places found specifically in the Old English poetic 'spatial *imaginaire*', to borrow Michelet's expression. As was discussed above, philosophers of place such as Casey and Malpas have not only shown 'place' to be a meaningful category with which humans make sense of the world but also, therefore, a meaningful object of study in its own right. Casey's charting of the history of place refutes Camille's suggestion that it is a 'postmedieval category', a conclusion

[86] Wolf, 'Place, Space, and Identity', pp. 1–18.

corroborated by the analysis put forward in this thesis. Indeed, learned authors from late Antiquity and Anglo-Saxon England, such as Augustine, Isidore, Bede and Alcuin, engaged with literal places and exploited spatial metaphors in their writings. However, heeding Boulton's caveat that place and space cannot be taken for granted or assumed to have meant the same thing to medieval people as they mean to the modern commentator, wherever possible I allow the texts to speak for themselves. As such, I do not adopt an overtly (postmodern) theoretical approach to place in this thesis, but rather utilise the tools of more conventional literary analysis and close reading to uncover how place is represented, what its defining characteristics are, and what its underlying significance may have been in Old English poetry. The advantages of such an approach are the moderation if not the elimination of modern biases which one might bring to the texts despite best efforts to avoid this. By focusing solely on vernacular poetry, it is possible to delve deeper into a particular mode of writing and establish how place was conceived of in the poetic corpus. What becomes evident over the course of the present analysis is that place is imagined not to be immutable, but in a state of constant flux, as the concept of place is continually renegotiated and redefined. One crucial aspect of place as it is presented in Old English poetry, however, is that it is both fleeting and representative of the transience of all earthly things, in contrast with the heavenly joys of eternal life.

The first kind of place to be examined in Chapter 1 is the hall, the central place of aristocratic society. After providing a brief overview of the archaeological reality of early medieval Germanic halls, the royal hall *par excellence* in Old English poetry, Heorot, is analysed in terms of its size, physical features, building materials, adornments, and superlative status amongst all dwellings. Occupying a prominent position very early on in the text of *Beowulf*, Heorot is presented as the locus of the ideal society—the *comitatus* of a lord and his retainers—whose ties are strengthened by communal acts of drinking, speech-making and boasting, and the sharing out of treasure. These activities are reflected in the epithets given to

Heorot, emphasising further the hall's social importance. However, the hall's physicality is brought into sharp relief by the foreshadowing of its burning at the very moment of its construction. The wooden hall's vulnerability to flame is a poignant reminder of the ephemeral nature of all human endeavours, a fact brought home in the poem by the razing to the ground of Beowulf's own hall towards the end of the poem. Nonetheless, as the ruined Roman city of *The Ruin* attests, not even stone is a safeguard against the deleterious effects of time on human places. This elegiac contemplation of a crumbling city creates a powerful 'sense of place' whilst simultaneously undermining any notion of the stability of place. The highly ornate use of double alliteration and paronomasia throughout *The Ruin* elevates this place and mirrors the sense of awe and wonder experienced by the poem's speaker. The poem also exploits the poetic diction of the hall, rendering 'the old work of giants' as something more immediate and tangible. However, that the buildings have gone the same way as the master-builders who devised them speaks to the powerful sense of transience which pervades the poem. This is the clearest intimation that place itself is, like all earthly things, fundamentally fleeting.

In its analysis of more overtly elegiac poems, Chapter 2 examines the experience of exile as one which can be either untethered from or firmly rooted in place. The first part of this chapter compares the involuntary exiles of *The Wanderer*, *The Riming Poem*, and *Resignation* on the one hand with the voluntary 'exile' of *The Seafarer* on the other. The speakers of the first three of these poems, and of *The Wanderer* in particular, lament their severance from society in the hall. In his deployment of the *ubi sunt* motif and his contemplation of the ruined walls of the hall, the Wanderer conveys his keen sense of displacement, a feeling amplified by the binding power of the sea which surrounds him. In contrast, by choosing to undertake his sea voyage, the Seafarer sets out on a figurative *peregrinatio pro amore Dei*, and rejoices in the distance placed between himself and human society, and in the sea journey which will lead him, eventually, to the heavenly community. In stark contrast with both of these experiences

of exile, the female speaker of *The Wife's Lament* mourns what appears to be her forced removal from human society and estrangement from her lord. After a thorough philological assessment of the manuscript reading *herheard*/*her heard* (line 15b), the analysis establishes where the Wife has been exiled to and the order of events which have led her there. As in *The Ruin*, extensive alliteration and paronomasia underscore the affective power of the passage describing the Wife's new dwelling, which has parallels with the dwelling imagined for her estranged lord. For the Wife, place and belonging are not abiding concepts, but can shift in accordance with changes in circumstances, however ambiguous the Wife's circumstances may be. *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* offer the consolation of the promise of the heavenly homeland to those who seek God's mercy: earthly place, though fleeting, can ultimately be exchanged for the heavenly place. *The Wife's Lament*, however, affords no such consolation, instead revealing the human experience of place to be unstable and fleeting, even over the course of a single lifespan.

Where Chapter 2 suggests that it is the experience of place which is fundamentally unfixed, the verse saints' lives studied in Chapter 3 show that place itself is capable of change. Like the Seafarer who chooses voluntary exile, the eponymous saint of *Guthlac A*, following in the Antonine tradition, leaves the cenobitic community of the monastery in favour of the life of a hermit in the *westen*, 'desert'. The characterless space of the desert not only separates Guthlac from human society, but functions as a container for Guthlac's spiritual struggle against the demonic inhabitants of a *beorg*, 'hill'. Through his pursuit of salvation and triumph over his adversaries, Guthlac transforms this unholy place into a holy one, a transformation anticipated throughout the poem by the repeated references to the verdancy of the place. The poem exploits the classical *topos* of the *locus amoenus* to convey the desirability of the *beorg*, and to symbolise Guthlac's achievement of salvation. In this way, a link is established between the earthly realm and the heavenly kingdom, demonstrating one way in which this most desired

of places can be attained. In *Andreas*, the city of Mermedonia undergoes a similar transformation, thanks to the intervention of Andrew, from a heathen place to a Christian one. With its seemingly Roman characteristics, descriptions of Mermedonia recall the urban imagery of *The Ruin*, but it is through textual borrowings from *Beowulf* that descriptions of place are put to the greatest effect in *Andreas*. Specific features of this place come into focus at critical moments in the narrative and highlight the *Andreas*-poet's capacity for creative repurposing of his source material. Even Mermedonia's transformed state is characterised by language reminiscent of that used of Heorot, discussed in Chapter 1. Crucially, though, this chapter shows that place can be changed for the better when its undesirable inhabitants themselves are either converted to Christianity or cleansed from that place altogether.

Finally, Chapter 4 explores some of the more unsettling aspects of place, as seen most vividly in the dwellings of Beowulf's monstrous adversaries. This chapter first examines the role of Grendel as the figure who rules over the moors, fens, and fastnesses which surround and contain Heorot, a function underscored by assonance and wordplay used in descriptions of Grendel and his actions. More remarkable than these features, however, are the poetic devices employed in the two depictions of Grendel's mother's mere, one of the most striking instances of place in all of Old English literature. The evocative topography of the mere is evidently meant to provoke fear in the poem's audience, if not in Beowulf himself, not least because of the numerous parallels with the hellish scene depicted in Blickling Homily XVI. The inverted features of the *locus amoenus* here mark the place out as a *locus terribilis*, at the centre of which lies Grendel's mother's *niðsele*, 'hostile hall', itself an inversion of Hrothgar's hall of Heorot. The strange familiarity of Grendel's mother's abode turns human social space on its head and poses a direct challenge to human society itself. The second part of this chapter then scrutinises the construction of place in the dragon's barrow in the second half of *Beowulf*. This analysis reveals another place which evokes, through its physical features, the Anglo-Saxons'

Roman architectural inheritance. As the resting place of the treasure of the so-called Last Survivor's people, the place is thus framed as a kind of *memento mori* left by a long-departed civilisation, as brought home to Beowulf as he lies dying, gazing on the walls of his defeated foe's adopted dwelling place. Finally, the chapter shows how Beowulf's own burial mound resembles the dragon's barrow in a number of pertinent ways, both in terms of its location and appearance and in terms of its enduring significance. Although this place is intended as an eternal memorial to the reputation of an ostensibly good king, it is instead an enduring, if not everlasting, monument to the transience of place, people, and all earthly things.

Chapter One
Constructed Places: The Hall and the City

> Sele sceal stondan, sylf ealdian
> ‘A hall must stand, itself grow old’
> —*Maxims I* 156
>
> Cyning sceal on healle beagas dælan
> ‘In the hall a king must share out rings’
> —*Maxims II* 28b–9a

As the gnomic statements from *Maxims I* and *II* above suggest, in Old English poetry the hall is a symbol of longevity—it ‘must grow old’—and of power, for it is the seat of power from which a king ‘must share out rings’. The chief manifestation of this type of place in the surviving poetic corpus, King Hrothgar’s hall of Heorot, simultaneously confirms and undermines these assertions. Although the hall will last as long as Hrothgar lives, it will ultimately be razed to the ground by the Heathobards; and although Heorot is nominally Hrothgar’s seat of power, he has been deprived of its proper use during the twelve years of Grendel’s depredations. Nevertheless, despite the uncertainty which looms over Heorot, it is quite clearly presented as the central locus of human society. This place is both what Cresswell would call ‘a meaningful location’, and one in which human social space is ‘produced’, to use Lefebvre’s phrase.[1] The main stratum of society encountered in Old English poetry, and indeed the only one found in the hall, is an ‘idealized’—and, to a certain extent, timeless—demographic group of aristocratic rank.[2] It is important that any discussion of the society

[1] See discussion in the Introduction above.
[2] Hugh Magennis, *Images of Community in Old English Poetry*, CSASE, 18 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 11.

depicted in Old English poetry keep this basic but often unheeded observation in mind, especially as this society has often been taken for granted, as Hugh Magennis points out:

> At the core of the imagery [of community] is the concept of the hall in the stronghold and of the feasting and communal life which are enacted there. This is a concept much alluded to in Old English criticism but seldom analysed in any detail.[3]

Magennis has treated the representation of this community and its social practice at length, and so the following discussion is concerned less with the finer details of communal life itself than it is with the place where human social practice is 'enacted', as manifested chiefly in the royal hall of Heorot. Most of this analysis treats the construction both of a physical place—the hall—and of the notion of 'place', since it is often, if not always, this particular type of place to which other Old English poems look back, as will be seen elsewhere in this thesis, especially in Chapters 2 and 4.[4] Despite the apparent timelessness of the idealised hall and the aristocratic society which it contains, place is nonetheless shown in Old English poetry to be mutable and fleeting, like earthly life itself, as expressed, for instance, in *Beowulf* when Grendel's mother leaves *þas lænan gesceaft*, 'this fleeting Creation' (*Beo* 1622b). The most obvious example of the transience of place, though, is found in *The Ruin*, with its haunting imagery of the crumbling time- and weather-ravaged walls and buildings of a Roman city. Accordingly, this chapter concludes with an analysis on the instability of place as depicted in *The Ruin*, which also utilises some of the same language of place found in descriptions of Heorot, making it a worthy companion piece in the study of human dwelling places in Old English poetry.

In representations of Anglo-Saxon aristocratic society, the Germanic lord of Old English poetry was, as Renée Trilling puts it, 'as anachronistic then as he is now, and heroic

[3] Magennis, *Images of Community*, p. 33.
[4] Anita R. Riedinger, '"Home" in Old English Poetry', *NM*, 96 (1995), 51–9 (p. 51).

Old English verse accordingly is coloured by a profound sense of nostalgia'.[5] Although the archaeological evidence for early medieval Germanic halls (discussed below) broadly corroborates descriptions of the hall in Old English poetry—most notably, of Heorot—there is no serious suggestion that, at the time when our sole surviving copy of *Beowulf* was written down around the turn of the first millennium, the poem's audience, aristocratic society, would have resided in the same structures or settlements as those set in a heroic age centuries earlier. And if, as the philological consensus holds, *Beowulf* was composed in the first half of the eighth century, the type of royal hall embodied in Heorot was already a thing of the past, even then.[6] Since the prevalence of such halls peaked during the sixth century and they were already abandoned by the second half of the seventh, the poem is 'a retrospective' on the age of royal halls.[7] The image of the hall, then, is the product of nostalgia, as much an anachronism to eighth-to-tenth-century Anglo-Saxon aristocratic and monastic society as it is, in a sense, to readers today.[8] As J.R.R. Tolkien remarked of this quality of the poem, 'The illusion of historical truth and perspective, that has made *Beowulf* seem such an attractive quarry, is largely a product of art'.[9] Nevertheless, the image, or 'illusion', of the hall is a powerful one in Old English poetry, and especially in *Beowulf*, where it is, in Edward Irving's view, 'the major controlling theme throughout the poem from beginning to end'. As Irving goes on, 'To trace the ways this centred symbol shimmers in the imagination in various changing lights, as halls

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[5] Renée R. Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia: Historical Representation in Old English Verse* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), pp. 3–4. Cf. Peter Clemoes, *Interactions of Thought and Language in Old English Poetry*, CSASE, 12 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 3, who states of the *Beowulf*-poet that 'His business was to make a portion of tradition come alive to an audience in the present, *to stir a contemporary response of a traditional sort*' (emphasis added).

[6] The question of the dating of *Beowulf* has generated a wide range of views; however, an earlier date is supported by a wealth of philological evidence. For an excellent summary, see *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. clxiii–clxxx; for a collection of views supporting an earlier date, see *The Dating of Beowulf: A Reassessment*, ed. by Leonard Neidorf (Cambridge: Brewer, 2014); and for assorted views generally favouring a later date, see *The Dating of Beowulf*, ed. by Colin Chase (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

[7] Blair, pp. 103–38, at 137.

[8] Garner, *Structuring Spaces*, p. 49.

[9] J. R. R. Tolkien, '*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 22 (1936), 245–95, repr. in *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, ed. by Christopher Tolkien (London: Allen and Unwin, 1983; repr. HarperCollins, 2006), p. 7.

are built, attacked, restored, abandoned, laid waste, is to gain a sharper understanding of the poem's larger meanings'.[10] Not just a physically central locus, then, the hall is a conceptually central structure, 'a metonym of the society centered in it'.[11] For Helen Bennett, conversely, the hall is not 'the locus of social and poetic meaning-making' that critics have traditionally viewed it as, but rather it 'serves to introduce and reinforce themes of limitation and indeterminacy in the human activity of making meaning'.[12] A less sceptical view is offered by John M. Hill, who suggests that the hall is '*more* than a place or center; rather it becomes a fundamental mode of organization', stressing the importance of its social significance rather than its physical centrality.[13] However, before addressing the role of the hall in Old English poetry—both as a physical place and as a 'metonym' for human society—the archaeological reality of early Anglo-Saxon and other Germanic royal halls shall briefly be considered.

The Hall in Anglo-Saxon England

As noted above, the construction and use of royal halls of the type which appears to be described in *Beowulf* had peaked in Anglo-Saxon England by around the end of the sixth century and were largely abandoned by the middle of the seventh. Despite the effect of timelessness in the literary depiction of a hall like Heorot, these royal halls, made primarily of timber, 'were not built to last', and they would be deliberately replaced as they became subject to wear and tear. Nevertheless, with their prominent stature and 'remarkable' outer appearance,

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[10] Edward B. Irving Jr, *Rereading Beowulf* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Philadelphia Press, 1989), p. 133.
[11] Daniel Donoghue, *Old English Literature: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), p. 29. See also Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, p. 181; James W. Earl, 'The Role of the Men's Hall in the Development of the Anglo-Saxon Superego', *Psychiatry*, 46 (1983), 139–60 (p. 148); Kathryn Hume, 'The Concept of the Hall in Old English Poetry', *ASE*, 3 (1974), 63–74 (pp. 68–9); and Jennifer Neville, *Representations of the Natural World in Old English Poetry*, CSASE, 27 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 68.
[12] Helen T. Bennett, 'The Postmodern Hall in *Beowulf*: Endings Embedded in Beginnings', *Heroic Age*, 12 (2009) <http://www.heroicage.org/issues/12/ba.php> [accessed 19 October 2019] (abstract; no pages given).
[13] John M. Hill, *The Cultural World of Beowulf* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), p. 6 (emphasis added).

royal halls were ‘conspicuous in the landscape’ and demonstrated ‘lavish’ use of wealth and were thus potent symbols of power.[14] The construction of halls such as the one shown in Figure 1 below was widespread across the Iron-age and early-medieval Germanic world, with examples found in Lejre (Sjælland, Denmark), Lofotr (Lofoten archipelago, northern Norway), and Feddersen-Wierde (Lower Saxony, Germany).[15] In Anglo-Saxon England, notable sites of early aristocratic halls include Yeavering (Northumberland), Cheddar (Somerset), and Cowdery’s Down (Hampshire).[16] Unlike the stone Roman buildings left behind across the British landscape, and discussed at the end of this chapter, these halls, like most other Anglo-Saxon buildings were constructed in timber.[17] Masonry was reserved principally for churches, and used increasingly in later Anglo-Saxon England as more churches and minsters were built, but barely used at all in post-Roman, pre-Christian England.[18] In its physical description, Heorot does have some ‘scanty parallels’ with these Anglo-Saxon halls;[19] however, the most

[14] Blair, p. 123.

[15] For the Scandinavian situation, see Stefan Brink, ‘Political and Social Structures in Early Scandinavia: A Settlement-history Pre-study of the Central Place’, *Tor*, 28 (1996), 235–82; and John Niles, ‘*Beowulf* and Lejre’, in *Beowulf and Lejre*, ed. by John D. Niles, with Tom Christensen and Marijane Osborn (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2007), pp. 183–9. For a general study of early medieval halls, see Michael W. Thompson, *The Medieval Hall: The Basis of Secular Domestic Life, 600–1600 AD* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995), pp. 11–27.

[16] For the original archaeological reports for each of these sites, see, respectively, Brian Hope-Taylor, *Yeavering – An Anglo-British Centre of Early Northumbria* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1977); Philip Rahtz, *The Saxon and Medieval Palaces at Cheddar: Excavations 1960–2*, British Archaeological Reports: British Series, 65 (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1979); and Martin Millett, with Simon James, ‘Excavations at Cowdery’s Down, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 1978–81’, *The Archaeological Journal*, 140 (1983), 151–79, and Simon James, Anne Marshall, and Martin Millett, ‘An Early Medieval Building Tradition’, *The Archaeological Journal*, 141 (1984), 182–215.

[17] Garner, *Structuring Spaces*, pp. 32–42; Howe, *Writing the Map*, pp. 48–50. See especially Helena Hamerow, ‘Anglo-Saxon Timber Buildings and Their Social Context’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, ed. by Helena Hamerow, David A. Hinton, and Sally Crawford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 128–55; and, on domestic dwellings in particular, P.V. Addyman, ‘The Anglo-Saxon House: A New Review’, *ASE*, 1 (1972), 273–307.

[18] See, e.g., Helen Gittos, ‘Christian Sacred Spaces and Places’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, ed. by Helena F. Hamerow, David Alban, and Sally Crawford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 831–2, and *Liturgy, Architecture, and Sacred Places*, pp. 98–9, 180–2. On the abrupt transition from using stone as a building material in Roman Britain to using timber after 410, see Howe, *Writing the Map*, pp. 75–100.

[19] Rosemary Cramp, ‘The Hall in *Beowulf* and in Archaeology’, in *Heroic Poetry in the Anglo-Saxon Period: Studies in Honor of Jess B. Bessinger*, ed. by Helen Damico and John Leyerle, Studies in Medieval Culture, 32 (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1992), pp. 331–46, at 343.

significant real-world analogue for Heorot is the royal hall—or, rather, halls—of Gammel ('Old') Lejre.

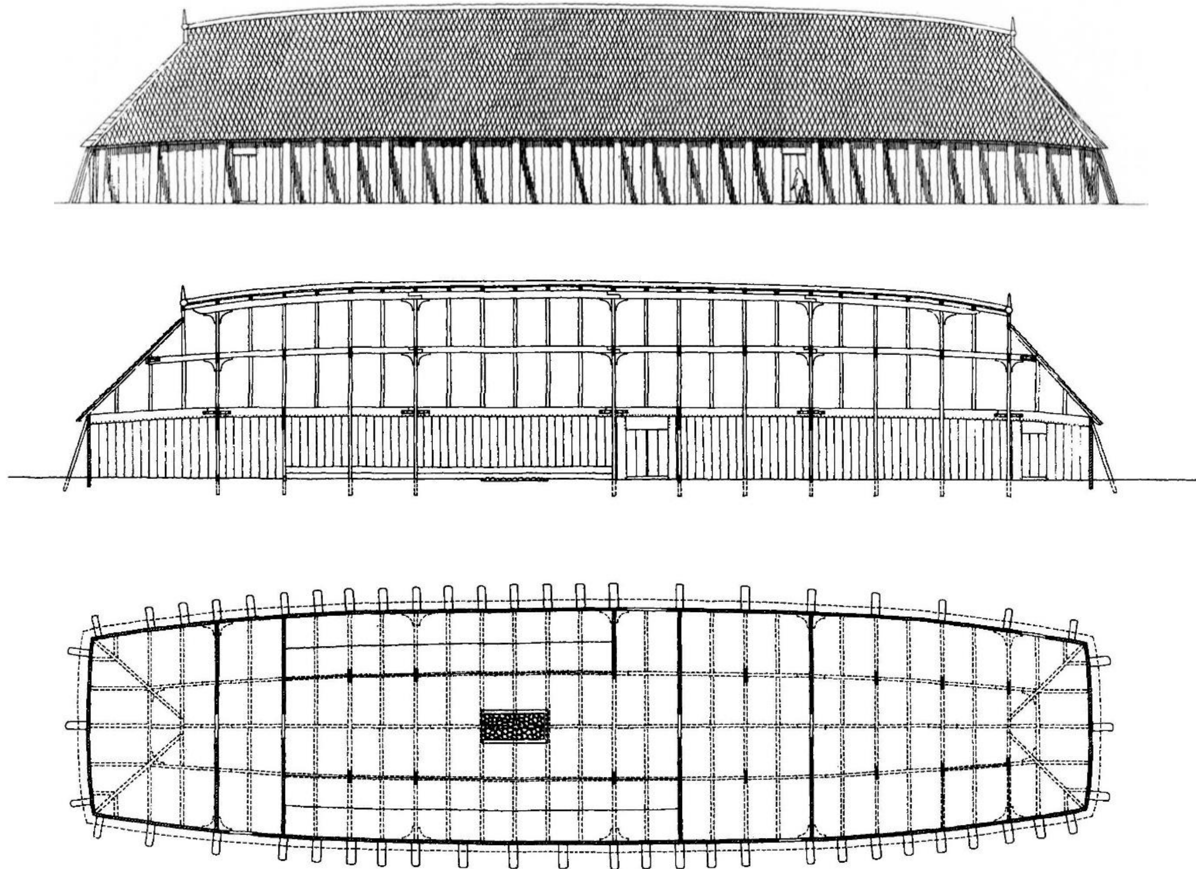

Fig. 1: From Schmidt, 'Reconstruction of the Lejre Hall'.
Drawings by Holger Schmidt.

A century after Gregor Sarrazin first posited a link between Lejre and *Beowulf*, in the 1980s archaeologists led by Tom Christensen uncovered evidence (namely, post holes) of multiple royal halls which had been built on top of one another between the sixth and tenth centuries.[20]

[20] On the archaeological findings from Lejre, see Tom Christensen, 'Lejre Beyond Legend – The Archaeological Evidence', *Journal of Danish Archaeology*, 10 (1991), 163–185, and *Lejre: syn og sagn* (Roskilde: Roskilde Museums Forlag, 1991), repr. in 'Lejre: Fact and Fable', trans. by Faith Ingwersen, in *Beowulf and Lejre*, ed. by Niles, pp. 13–102 (and on the hall in particular, see esp. pp. 42–8). For reconstructions of the halls, see Holger Schmidt, 'Reconstruction of Lejre Hall', *Journal of Danish Archaeology*, 10 (1991), 186–90, repr. in *Beowulf and Lejre*, ed. by Niles, pp. 103–8; and Nicolai Garhøj Larsen, 'Virtual Reconstruction: The Viking Hall at Lejre', in *Beowulf and Lejre*, ed. by Niles, pp. 159–66. For an account of the more recent findings from the Lejre site (including other halls), see Tom Christensen, 'A New Round of Excavations at Lejre (to 2005)', trans. by Faith Ingwersen, in *Beowulf and Lejre*, ed. by Niles, pp. 109–26.

Lejre (from Old Norse Hleiðr, probably 'tent' or 'booth')[21] was the royal seat of the Skjǫldungar—or Scyldingas in Old English—and so the site at Lejre is considered to be the strongest candidate for the place which might, at an early stage in the tale's continental history, have inspired Heorot in *Beowulf*.[22] The main long hall uncovered at Lejre, known as House IV, measured 48.5 metres in length and 11.5 metres at its widest, and was rebuilt at least three times over several centuries. The presumably vast roof was supported by internal support beams and so-called 'raking timber', consisting of some 44 external posts (visible in Fig. 2 below).[23] The main hall was surrounded by other, smaller domestic buildings built of timber and typically featuring firepits.[24]

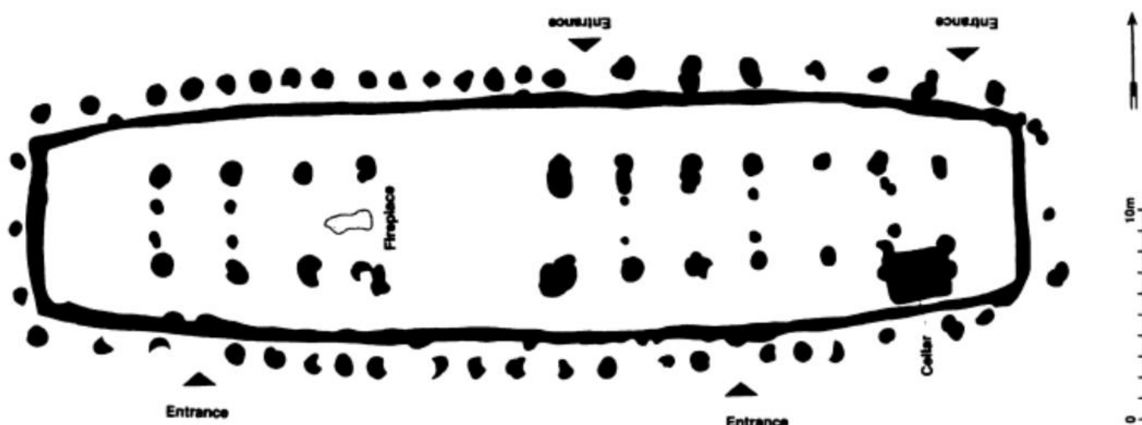

Fig. 2: From Christensen, *Lejre: syn og sagn*, p. 39.
Drawing by Niklas B. Nielsen and Catharina Oksen, Roskilde Museum.

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[21] *Lejre* < ODan *lethra* < ON *hleiðr*, cf. Gothic *hleiþra*, OE *hlæd(d)er*, OFris *hladder*, *hleder*, OHG *hleitra*. See Theodore Andersson, 'Lejre', in *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, ed. by Heinrich Beck and others, 2nd edn, 35 vols (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1968–2008), XVIII: *Landschaftsrecht – Loxstedt*, ed. by Heinrich Beck, Dieter Geuenich, and Heiko Steuer (2001), pp. 248–9; Christensen, 'Lejre: Fact and Fable', p. 89; Bent Jørgensen, *Dansk Stednavneleksikon*, 3 vols (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1981), I: *Øerne øst for Storebælt*, p. 73; *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. lviii; and Jan de Vries, *Altnordisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Leiden: Brill, 1961), p. 236, who defines it as 'the booths erected at a meeting place (site of the thing, place of celebration)' ('die buden auf einem versammlungsort [dingstätte, festplatz] errichtet').

[22] On Lejre as the historical Skjǫldung seat of power, see John D. Niles, '*Beowulf* and Lejre', in *Beowulf and Lejre*, ed. by Niles, pp. 189–99, and on the legendary association with the Scyldingas in OE tradition, see pp. 209–14. For an overview of the legends associated with Lejre, see Marijane Osborn, 'Legends of Lejre, Home of Kings', in *Beowulf and Lejre*, ed. by Niles, pp. 235–54.

[23] Christensen, 'Lejre: Fact and Fable', p. 42.

[24] Christensen, 'Lejre: Fact and Fable', pp. 48–53.

Whether the image of precisely this type of long hall would have been conjured in the minds of clerical readers in a monastic setting or of aristocratic listeners in a later royal complex is not important, though Magennis stresses that the imagined world of the hall found throughout the Old English poetic corpus was no less relevant to the communal reality of the monastic setting in which this literature was produced and consumed.[25] In any case, it seems reasonable to suppose that the poem's audience would have conceived of a vast and imposing wooden structure as being home to the royal court of Hrothgar. As Niles neatly puts it in referring to the topography around Heorot, '[W]here the action of *Beowulf* takes place is in a theater of the mind, not in any actual landscape to be seen on earth'.[26] The same might well be said, of course, for Heorot itself. That educated Anglo-Saxons were acutely aware of the significance of architectural spaces is evident from a number of examples of learned writing. It is a commonplace in discussions of the hall in Old English literature to invoke Bede's account of the conversion of King Edwin in his *Historia ecclesiastica* II.xii, in which one of Edwin's counsellors likens this transient earthly life to the passage of a sparrow through the hall in winter, such that it is

> 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.[27]
>
> [as if, while you were sitting at dinner with your leaders and ministers in the winter time, with the fire lit in the centre and the upper room filled with heat, with the raging storms of winter rains or snow everywhere outside, a sparrow were to arrive and fly swiftly through the house.]

[25] Magennis, *Images of Community*, pp. 11–14.
[26] Niles, '*Beowulf* and Lejre', p. 225.
[27] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. by Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 182–4. Cf. Bede's engagement with symbolic buildings in his biblical exegesis, mentioned in the Introduction.

In this metaphor, like the sparrow's fleeting relief from the ravages of winter outside, humans themselves enjoy 'only brief moments of respite' inside the shelter of the hall, or the house, an apt piece of 'cosmic symbolism' for the transience of human life.[28] The distinction between inside and outside is emphasised by the contrast between being within the hall, *accenso* […] *foco in medio*, 'with the fire lit in the centre [of the room]', and being aware of what lies without, *furentibus* […] *turbinibus hiemalium pluuiarum uel niuium*, 'with the raging storms of winter rains or snow', which reflect the external threats posed to human life more generally by what we today may call the 'natural world'.[29] Here, the fire is a metonym for the rest of the hall and human society within; however, as will be seen below, fire can also be a damaging and destabilising external force. Moreover, as noted in the Introduction, the act of building was used as a metaphor in the Old English translation of Augustine's *Soliloquies*, generally attributed to King Alfred or to his circle, for the gathering of knowledge imparted by the Church Fathers.[30] Aldhelm, too, employed architectural imagery as a metaphor for the composition of poetry at the end of his prose *De virginitate*, suggesting not only the importance of constructed spaces in the learned Anglo-Saxon imagination, but also their value in thinking metaphorically about other aspects of life and culture.[31] The following discussion assesses the role of the hall in *Beowulf* in particular, since it epitomises notions of place in the Old English poetic tradition.

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[28] Neville, pp. 24–5, at 24; cf. Magennis, *Images of Community*, p. 129; and Earl, 'The Role of the Men's Hall', p. 148.

[29] For a defining study of the 'natural world' in Old English poetry, see Neville, *Representations of the Natural World*.

[30] Garner, *Structuring Spaces*, pp. 40–2.

[31] Aldhelm, *Aldhelmi Malmesbiriensis Prosa De Virginitate cum Glossa Latina et Anglosaxonica*, ed. by Scott Gwara, CCSL 124A (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), p. 60; translated in Aldhelm, *The Prose Works*, trans. by Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren (Cambridge: Brewer, 1979; repr. 2009), pp. 130–1. On the parallel between these examples and *The Ruin* (discussed below), see Andy Orchard, 'Reconstructing *The Ruin*', in *Intertexts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture Presented to Paul E. Szarmach*, ed. by Virginia Blanton and Helene Scheck (Tempe, AZ and Turnhout: ACMRS with Brepols, 2009), pp. 60–1.

The construction of the hall of Heorot, ordered by Hrothgar in the opening lines of *Beowulf*, has been linked by a number of critics to the Creation as presented in the so-called 'Song of Creation' in lines 90b–8 of the poem; Alvin Lee went so far as to call it 'a hierophantic act, a manifestation of the sacred in the world of men, metaphorically identifiable with the Creation of the world itself'.[32] The importance of Hrothgar's act, whether hierophantic or not, lies in its establishment of a relationship between the macro- and the microcosmic—between space and place.[33] If Creation is a dwelling erected by God for all of humankind, or the Earthly City in Augustine's phrase, Heorot is the gift from Hrothgar, himself a kind of pseudo-creator, to his people. The significance of Heorot in *Beowulf* is apparent since it is described very early in the poem, as soon as Hrothgar has himself been introduced in lines 59–67a:

Him on mod bearn
þæt healreced hatan wolde,
medoærn micel men gewyrcean
þon[n]e yldo bearn æfre gefrunon,
ond þær on innan eall gedælan
geongum ond ealdum swylc him God sealde,
buton folcscare ond feorum gumena.

[32] Alvin A. Lee, *The Guest-Hall of Eden: Four Essays on the Design of Old English Poetry* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), pp. 179, 186; indeed, this is Lee's central idea. See also Daniel G. Calder, 'Setting and Ethos: The Pattern of Measure and Limit in *Beowulf*', *SP*, 69 (1972), 21–37 (pp. 22–3); Earl, 'The Role of the Men's Hall', p. 148; Malcolm Godden, 'Biblical Literature: The Old Testament', in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 223; Garner, *Structuring Spaces*, p. 21; William Helder, 'The Song of Creation in *Beowulf* and the Interpretation of Heorot', *English Studies in Canada*, 13 (1987), 243–55 (p. 243); Edward B. Irving Jr, *A Reading of Beowulf* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 90–1; Michelet, *Creation, Migration, and Conquest*, p. 52; Neville, pp. 62–4; Paul Beekman Taylor, 'Heorot, Earth, and Asgard: Christian Poetry and Pagan Myth', *Tennessee Studies in Literature*, 11 (1966), 119–30 (pp. 120–3); and Faith Wallis, 'Cædmon's Created World and the Monastic Encyclopedia', in *Cædmon's Hymn and Material Culture in the World of Bede*, ed. by Allen J. Frantzen and John Hines, Medieval European Studies, 10 (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2006), p. 93. Jess Bessinger's imagined version of Cædmon's *Hymn* 'secularized as a Beowulfian panegyric', celebrating both the creation of Heorot and its creator, also implies this link. See Jess B. Bessinger Jr, 'Homage to Caedmon and Others: A Beowulfian Praise Song', in *Old English Studies in Honour of John C. Pope*, ed. by Robert B. Burlin and Edward B. Irving Jr (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), pp. 91–106, at 91–2.
[33] On ideas of macro- and microcosm more generally, see James E. Cross, 'Aspects of Microcosm and Macrocosm in Old English Literature', in *Studies in Old English Literature in Honor of Arthur G. Brodeur*, ed. by Stanley B. Greenfield (Eugene: University of Oregon Books, 1963), pp. 1–22.

Ða ic wide gefrægn weorc gebannan
manigre mægþe geond þisne middangeard,
folcstede frætwan. Him on fyrste gelomp,
ædre mid yldum, þæt hit wearð eal gearo,
healærna mæst; scop him Heort naman
se þe his wordes geweald wide hæfde.
He beot ne aleh: beagas dælde,
sinc æt symle. Sele hlifade
heah ond horngeap; heaðowylma bad,
laðan liges— ne wæs hit lenge þa gen
þæt se *e*cghete[34] aþumswe*or*an
æfter wælniðe wæcnan scolde.

[It came to his mind
that he wanted to command men to construct
a hall-building, a mead-hall great[er][35]
than the children of men had ever heard of,
and there inside to share out
to young and old all that God gave him,
save for the nation and the wealth of men.
Then, I have heard, work was ordered far and wide
for many a people throughout this middle-earth,
[and] the folk-dwelling to be adorned.[36] In time it came to pass for them,
promptly amongst men, that it was all ready,
the greatest of hall-buildings; the one whose word had power
far and wide created for it the name Heor(o)t.
He did not leave his promise unfulfilled: he shared out rings,
treasure at the feast. The hall towered
high and horn-gabled; it awaited battle-surges,
hostile flame—it was not long thereafter
that sword-hostility was to be awoken
for sons- and fathers-in-law after deadly-slaughter.] (*Beo* 67b–85)

Despite Lori Ann Garner's lament that in nearly twenty lines of poetry 'we are given only two actual physical details [about Heorot], and these are quite vague', this passage is in fact rather

[34] On the usual emendation of MS *secg hete* to *se ecghete* at line 84a, which is accepted here, see Andy Orchard, *A Critical Companion to Beowulf* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2003), p. 240, n. 13.
[35] On the difficulty in interpreting line 70 and the emendation of MS *þone* to *þonne*, see *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. 118–19. On the problems with taking *micel* as a comparative (i.e. 'greater') in line 69a and with emending *þone* ('which') to *þonne* ('when') in 70a, see Fred C. Robinson, 'Two Non-Cruces in *Beowulf*', *Tennessee Studies in Literature and Language*, 11 (1966), 151–60 (esp. p. 155); and Raymond P. Tripp Jr, 'The Exemplary Role of Hrothgar and Heorot', *Philological Quarterly*, 56 (1977), 123–9 (p. 125). Adopting the text as it is found in the MS undermines, in Tripp's view, arguments which consider the creation of a superlative hall as an act of pride.
[36] Here '*was ordered* to be adorned' is implied, such that this clause is governed elliptically by *gebannan*; see *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 119.

suggestive in terms of what it tells us about Hrothgar's hall.[37] Heorot's size is foregrounded in this passage: it is *micel*, 'great, large' (69a; possibly with a comparative sense), it *hlifade heah*, 'towered high' (81b–2a),[38] and thus it is capacious enough for the sharing out of rings to, presumably, many retainers and for large feasts to be held inside it (80–1a).[39] The splendour of the treasure (*sinc*, 81a) is reflected in the decoration of the hall itself, which is ordered 'to be adorned' (*frætwan*, 76a). Finally, we can infer something from the 'fated image' of the hall's vulnerability to flame (82b–3a) about the building material used in the hall's construction: it is, of course, made primarily of wood.[40] This is also, it should be noted, the same fate with which Beowulf's own hall meets at the end of the poem: *his sylfes ham, / bolda selest brynewylmum mealt, gifstol Geata*, 'his own home, the best of dwellings, the gift-throne of the Geats, had been consumed by burning flame' (*Beo* 2325b–7a). Even if these details remain somewhat 'vague' as Garner suggests, the function of this passage is less about presenting an archaeologically faithful visualisation of the hall as it is about emphasising the importance of the hall for Hrothgar and his subjects as a site of communal activity; or, as Niles remarks of Heorot, the poet composed 'not a construction manual but a heroic poem'.[41] Moreover, the

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[37] Lori Ann Garner, 'Returning to Heorot: *Beowulf*'s Famed Hall and its Modern Incarnations', *Parergon*, 27 (2010), 157–81 (p. 157), and *Structuring Spaces*, p. 22; cf. Niles, '*Beowulf* and Lejre', pp. 172, 177. Throughout *Beowulf*, Heorot it generally referred to as *heal*(*l*), 'hall', *reced*, 'hall', or *sele*, probably 'hall'; however, see C.H. de Roo, 'The Old English *Sele*', *Neophilologus*, 64 (1980), 113–20, who argues that *sele* means simply 'dwelling', and not 'hall'. It is called *heal*(*l*) (derived compounds marked with *) at 78a*, 89a, 487a, 614b, 642b, 663b, 838a*, 925b, 1009a, 1214b, and 1288a; *reced* (including compounds) at 310a, 326b, 412a, 704a*, 714b*, 720a, 728a, 770b, 993b*, 1237b, and 1799b; and *sele* (including compounds) at lines 81b, 323b, 411b, 443a*, 482a*, 485a*, 492a*, 713b, 767a*, 771b*, 826b, 919b, 994a*, 1016b, 1094a*, 1177a*, 1639a*, and 1640b (after Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, p. 149, n. 29).

[38] Cf. *Beo* 1799b, *reced hliuade*, 'the hall towered'; and *Rim* 30: *Burgsele beofode, beorht hlifade*, 'The stronghold shook, towered bright' (30).

[39] Niles, '*Beowulf* and Lejre', p. 173.

[40] Lee, *The Guest-Hall*, p. 181. Cf. *Beo* 781b–2a, *Fin* 4, and the ON *Grottasǫngr*, sts. 19–20, in which the hall at Hleiðrargarðr (Lejre) is burnt; see *Grottasǫngr: The Song of Grotti*, ed. and trans. by Clive Tolley (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2008), pp. 41, 56–7. On the foreshadowing of the burning of Heorot, see *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 120; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 240–2; Taylor, 'Heorot, Earth, and Asgard', p. 123; and Karl P. Wentersdorf, 'The *Beowulf*-Poet's Vision of Heorot', *SP*, 104 (2007), 409–26 (p. 413). Cf., however, Norman E. Eliason, 'The Burning of Heorot', *Speculum*, 55 (1980), 75–83, who argues, rather, that these lines anticipate Grendel's depredations. It might also be possible that the allusion to the burning of this hall was meant to evoke the dragon's immolation of Beowulf's own hall (*Beo* 2324–7a).

[41] Niles, '*Beowulf* and Lejre', p. 174.

passage not only demonstrates the importance of *this* place in the rest of the poem, but also hints at the significance of place in general in Old English poetry.

Indeed, Heorot's great size, physical features, building materials, adornments, and superlative status are all stressed when it is described elsewhere in *Beowulf*.[42] Concerning Heorot's physical stature, Garner notes that its 'heroic associations are also indicated through its elevated location', such as when Beowulf describes the hall's position as being *on heahstede*, 'in a high place' (285a).[43] In addition to those references to Heorot's size discussed above, the poem also describes early on how Grendel *gewat ða neosian… / hean huses*, 'then went to seek out… the high house' (115–16a), and intended to ensnare one of Hrothgar's men *in sele þam hean*, 'in the high hall' (713b), a half-line repeated when the Geats later return from the mere *to sele þam hean* (919b).[44] In fact, the celebrated description of Grendel's approach to Heorot in lines 702b–836—'one of the most terrifying moments in English literature'—hinges on the direction of his intent towards the hall, just as it does on the contrast between the hall ahead of him and the mere whence he has come, discussed in Chapter 4.[45] Grendel's animosity towards Hrothgar and his people is from the outset centred on Heorot since *he dogora gehwam dream gehyrde / hludne in healle*, 'every day he heard loud mirth in the hall' (88–9a); this 'loud mirth' consists of *hearpan sweg, / swutol sang scopes*, 'the music of the

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[42] See, e.g., Garner, 'Returning to Heorot', pp. 157–64.
[43] Garner, 'Returning to Heorot', p. 163.
[44] Cf. Hygelac in his hall: *Bold wæs betlic, bregorof cyning, / hea*[*h on*] *healle*, 'The building was splendid, the king valiant, high in the hall' (1925–26).
[45] Michael Lapidge, '*Beowulf* and the Psychology of Terror', 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, MI: Western Michigan University, 1993), p. 383. On Grendel's approach to Heorot and the ensuing fight, see, e.g., Lana Stone Dieterich, 'Syntactic Analysis of Beowulf's Fight with Grendel', *Comitatus*, 14, 1 (1983), 5–17; Stanley B. Greenfield, 'Grendel's Approach to Heorot: Syntax and Poetry', in *Old English Poetry: Fifteen Essays*, ed. by Robert P. Creed, (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1967), pp. 275–84, and *The Interpretation of Old English Poems* (London: Routledge, 1972), pp. 122–30; Irving, *A Reading of Beowulf*, p. 100–4; Lapidge, 'Psychology of Terror', esp. pp. 383–4; Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe, '*Beowulf*, Lines 702b-836: Transformations and the Limits of the Human', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 23, 4 (1981), 484–94; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 189–94, and *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscript*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Brewer, 1995; repr. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), pp. 34–7; Alan Renoir, 'Point of View and Design for Terror in *Beowulf*', *NM*, 63 (1962), 154–67; and Richard N. Ringler, '*Him Sēo Wēn Gelēah*: The Design for Irony in Grendel's Last Visit to Heorot', *Speculum*, 41, 1 (1966), 49–67.

lyre, the clear song of the scop' (89b–90a), epitomised by the 'Song of Creation' in lines 90b–8, associated with Hrothgar's own establishment of Heorot.[46] The 'threefold bell-like announcement of Grendel's approach', consisting of ‹ *com* + infinitive ›, in each case describes his motion towards *þæt hornreced*, 'the horn-hall' (704a), his wish to ensnare men *in sele þam hean*, 'in the high hall' (713b), and his journey *to recede*, 'to the hall' (720a).[47] Moreover, Grendel *wod under wolcnum to þæs þe he winreced, / goldsele gumena gearwost wisse*, 'went under the clouds to where he well knew the wine-hall to be, the gold-hall of men' (714–15), and *he Hroþgares ham gesohte*, 'he sought Hrothgar's home' (717). With all of his intent focused on the hall and its inhabitants, Grendel then bursts through *recedes muþan*, 'the mouth of the hall' (724a)—an apt metaphor given the attention paid to Grendel's devouring of one of Hrothgar's thanes in lines 739–45a[48]—and this despite its being *fyrbendum fæst*, 'fastened with forged bands' (722a). Similarly, the rest of the hall itself is held together with iron bands: *he þæs fæste wæs innan ond utan irenbendum searoþoncum besmiþod*, 'it was firmly fastened, from within and without, ingeniously with iron bands' (773b–5a), and it was *eal inneweard irenbendum fæst*, 'fastened on the whole inside with iron bands' (998). The ensuing bloodshed is only brought to an end when Grendel encounters Beowulf, such that *hyge wæs him hinfus*, 'he was eager in his intent to escape' (755a), and, in a litotic turn of phrase, the narrator remarks, *Þæt wæs geocor sið / þæt se hearmscaþa to Heorote ateah*, 'That was a sorrowful

[46] Cf. the descriptions of the performance of poetry and music at *Beo* 1159b–60a, 2105–17a, and *Wid* 54–6. See Robert Boenig, 'The Anglo-Saxon Harp', *Speculum*, 71 (1996), 290–320, and 'Musical Instruments as Iconographical Artifacts in Medieval Poetry', in *Material Culture and Cultural Materialisms in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. by Curtis Perry (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), pp. 1–15, esp. 5–9; John M. Hill, 'The Social and Dramatic Functions of Oral Recitation and Composition in *Beowulf*', *Oral Theory*, 17 (2002), 310–24; and *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. 121, 233–4. On the lyre unearthed at Sutton Hoo Mound 1, see Rupert Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial*, 3 vols (London: British Museum, 1975–1983), III: *Late Roman and Byzantine Silver, Hanging-Bowls, Drinking Vessels, Cauldrons and Other Containers, Textiles, the Lyre, Pottery Bottle and Other Items* (1983), pp. 611–731; and Jess B. Bessinger Jr, 'The Sutton Hoo Harp Replica and Old English Musical Verse', in *Old English Poetry: Fifteen Essays*, ed. by Robert P. Creed (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1967), pp. 3–26.
[47] *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 158. On this repeated construction, see especially Eric Stanley, 'Notes on Old English Poetry', *LSE*, n.s. 20 (1989), 319–44 (pp. 327–9); and O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Transformations', p. 487.
[48] Irving, *A Reading of Beowulf*, p. 104; O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Transformations', p. 488. See also comments by Stanley B. Greenfield, 'The Canons of Old English Criticism', *English Literary History*, 34 (1967), 141–55 (pp. 150–2); and Lewis E. Nicholson, 'The Art of Interlace in *Beowulf*', *SN*, 52 (1980), 237–49.

journey that the harm-doer took to Heorot' (765b–6).[49] Notably, Grendel's intent is now very much directed *away from* the hall. Furthermore, whatever the meaning of the notorious crux *ealuscerwen*—taken by most critics to mean 'distress, terror'—the din of the struggle between Beowulf and Grendel is accentuated by the envelope pattern in lines 767–70, bracketed off by *Dryhtsele dynede*, 'The noble hall resounded' (767a), and *Reced hlynsode*, 'The hall was noisy' (770b).[50] This pair of formulaic half-lines seems to anticipate line 1317b—*healwudu dynede*, 'the hall-wood resounded'—where Beowulf's arrival in the hall pointedly draws attention to his absence at the moment when Grendel's mother strikes, when earlier it was his fight with Grendel which was the source of noise in the hall. In this passage, then, the hall is not merely a container for the action, but very much a part of it; indeed, the poem's narrator remarks,

> Þa wæs wundor micel   þæt se winsele
> wiðhæfde heaþodeorum,   þæt he on hrusan ne feol,
> fæger foldbold;   ac he þæs fæste wæs
> innan ond utan   irenbendum
> searoþoncum besmiþod.
>
> [It was a great wonder that the wine-hall
> withstood the battle-brave ones, that it did not fall to the ground,
> the fair earth-dwelling; but it was firmly worked,
> from within and without, ingeniously
> with iron bands.] (*Beo* 771–5a)

That it was a 'great wonder' that the hall remained standing after the fight emphasises just how fierce the struggle was. We are told that this is in no small part thanks to the *irenbend*[*a*], 'iron bands' (774b), which bind the hall both 'from within and without' and were *searoþoncum besmiþod*, 'ingeniously worked' (775a), recalling Beowulf's byrnie which is earlier described

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[49] On the use of litotes in Old English, see, e.g., Frederick Bracher, 'Understatement in Old English Poetry', *PMLA*, 52, 4 (1937), 915–34; A. Leslie Harris, 'Litotes and Superlative in *Beowulf*', *ES*, 69, 1 (1988), 1–11; and *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. cx–cxi.

[50] On *ealuscerwen*, see esp. Bruce Mitchell, 'Literary Lapses: Six Notes on *Beowulf* and its Critics', *RES*, 43 (1992), 1–17 (pp. 4–7); *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. 161–2, 368; and Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 82–3. Cf. *Finn* 30b: *buruhðelu dynede*, 'the stronghold floor resounded'; and *Rim* 28: *hlude hlynede, hleoþor dynede*, 'loudly it [music] sounded, song resounded'.

as *seowed smiþes orþancum*, 'sewn by the smith's ingenuity' (406), and which is, of course, lacking in this fight. This 'great wonder' also calls to mind the actions of the builder described in *The Gifts of Men*, who *wrætlice*, 'wondrously' (*Gifts* 44a), plans the construction of each dwelling and, moreover, *con he sidne ræced / fæste gefegan wiþ færdryrum*, 'he knows how to join fast the wide hall against sudden collapse' (47b–8). In the case of Heorot, despite the damage that the hall sustains, its structural soundness contrasts with Grendel's vulnerability to Beowulf's grip, such that his *fingras burston*, 'fingers broke' (760b); and then *him on eaxle wearð / syndolh sweotol, seonowe onsprungon, / burston banlocan*, 'on his shoulder appeared a great, visible wound, [his] sinews sprang asunder, [his] bone-locks burst' (816b–18a). Perhaps this suggests, though, that there is a cost to challenging Grendel: the damage inflicted against him is simultaneously wreaked on Heorot. Nevertheless, at the climax of the passage, Beowulf takes Grendel's severed arm—*hond..., / earm ond eaxle*, 'hand…, arm and shoulder'—and mounts it *under geapne hr*[*of*], 'under the vaulted roof' (834b–6), bringing intruder and the place of his intrusions together in a macabre gesture, and, like Grendel's visible wound, as *tacen sweotol*, 'a visible symbol' (833b), of Beowulf's victory. Importantly though, throughout this passage the hall is not a mere backdrop, but is clearly a key element of the narrative drama, and its importance as a human dwelling place (*winsele*, *fæger foldbold*) is underscored at the moment when it faces its greatest external threat yet.

Further descriptions of Heorot present the poem's reader, or listener, with an image of the hall which is clearer still.[51] Like its real-world analogues discussed above, Heorot is built of wood: it is susceptible to fire (82b–3a), it has wooden flooring (*healwudu dynede*, 1317b), at least in parts of the hall,[52] and, most explicitly, it is [*s*]*æl timbred*, 'a timbered hall' (307b).[53]

[51] For an alternative view, see Garner, *Structuring Spaces*, p. 22.
[52] Upon entering Heorot, Grendel *on fagne flor… treddode*, 'stepped onto the decorated floor' (*Beo* 725), sometimes taken to designate a Roman mosaic floor (e.g. Niles, '*Beowulf* and Lejre', p. 172), a view challenged by Marijane Osborn, 'Laying the Roman Ghost of *Beowulf* 320 and 725', *NM*, 70 (1969), 246–55 (pp. 248–54, esp. 249). Note as well the road to Heorot, which is similarly *stanfah*, 'stone-paved' (*Beo* 320a).
[53] On the wooden flooring, see *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 198.

Elsewhere, attention is drawn to the hall's roof (e.g. *Heorotes hrof*, 403a), which is described as being 'steep' (*steapne hrof*, 926b), 'vaulted' (*geapne hrof*, 836b; *geap*, 1800a), and strong enough to be the only structure, apparently, able fully to withstand the fight between Grendel and Beowulf undamaged, since *hrof ana genæs ealles ansund*, 'the roof alone survived all intact' (999b–1000a).[54] The roof is particularly striking, however, as it is *horngeap*, 'horn-gabled' (82a), and Heorot is described as *hornreced*, 'a horn-hall' (704a), probably in reference to horn-like beams protruding at the gable ends of the hall, features also attributed to the hall of *The Finnsburg Fragment* and the temple described in *Andreas*.[55] This interpretation, first put forward by Moritz Heyne, accords well with the name Heorot—also found in *Widsith* 49a—which means, simply, 'hart', 'stag' (cf. the normal spelling of the common noun *heort*).[56] Indeed, the name of the hall is spelt Heort/Hiort at lines 78b, 991b, and 2099a, and this choice of name 'may derive from a Germanic association of the hart […] with royalty'.[57] Paul

[54] Garner, *Structuring Spaces*, pp. 44–5. This does, however, contradict the earlier statement that the hall survived thanks to its iron bands (*Beo* 771–5a), discussed above. Cf. also Grendel's mother's dwelling, which is called *hrofsele*, 'a roofed hall' (1515a), as discussed in Chapter 4.

[55] *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. 119–20; cf. *Finn* 1, 4b: [*hor*]*nas byrnað næfre*, 'the horn-gables will never burn', and *hornas ne byrnað*, 'the horn-gables will not burn'; and *Ruin* 22a: *heah horngestreon*, 'an abundance of high gables'; and *Andr* 667b–8a: *tempel Dryhtnes, / heah ond horngeap*, 'the Lord's temple, high and horn-gabled'. On the architectural significance of the temple in *Andreas*, see Garner, *Structuring Spaces*, pp. 99–102.

[56] Moritz Heyne, *Ueber die Lage und Construction der Halle Heorot im angelsächsischen Beovulfliede; nebst einer Einleitung über angelsächsischen Burgenbau* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1864), p. 45. There are countless English place-names containing the element *heorot*, 'stag', usually following the normal phonological change to PDE 'Hart-' (a notable exception is Hertford). A particularly interesting example is the village of Hart in County Durham, which is recorded in Bede's *HE* 3.24 and 4.23 as *Heruteu* < OE *Heoroteg*, 'Stag Island' (a monastery founded in c. 640 by Hieu which gives its name to the now larger town of Hartlepool): see Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 292, 406; and Eilert Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-names*, 4th edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 222. For a detailed philological and historical discussion of Heruteu and its implications for the dating of *Beowulf*, see Joseph Harris, 'A Note on the Other Heorot', in *The Dating of Beowulf*, ed. by Neidorf, pp. 178–90.

[57] *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 119; Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, p. 187; and see esp. Wilhelm Heizmann, Hans Reichstein, and Heiko Steuer, 'Hirsch', in *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, ed. by Heinrich Beck and others, 2nd edn, 35 vols (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1968–2008), XIV: *Harfe und Leier – Hludana Hloðyn*, ed. by Heinrich Beck, Dieter Geuenich, and Heiko Steuer (1999), pp. 588–612. Cf. the stag atop the whetstone or sceptre found at Sutton Hoo Mound 1; see Rupert Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial*, 3 vols (London: British Museum, 1975–1983), II: *Arms, Armour, and Regalia* (1978), figs. 234–44, pls. 10–11. Tim Flight, 'Aristocratic Deer Hunting in Late Anglo-Saxon England: A Reconsideration, Based upon the *Vita S. Dvnstani*', *ASE*, 45 (2016), 311–31, argues that there was an aristocratic Anglo-Saxon tradition of deer hunting well before the Norman Conquest. Note also the associations in Old Norse tradition between Sigurðr Sigmundarson, the last lord of the Vǫlsungar, and *mikinn hjǫrt*, 'a great stag', in Brynhildr's interpretation of Guðrún Gjúkadóttir's dream in Chapter 27 of *Vǫlsunga saga / The Saga of the Volsungs*, ed. and trans. by R.G. Finch (London: Nelson, 1965), p. 46, and in Chapter 162 of *Þiðreks saga af Bern*, ed. by Guðni Jónsson (Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1951), p. 231, according to which Sigurðr, an orphan, is brought up by a hind. Some

Beekman Taylor suggests, however, that the name Heorot probably has less to do with any horned gable features or aristocratic connotations than it does with 'sacred associations' with the hart, and that antlers may have been affixed to the gables 'to enhance the association'.[58] Although the hart was associated with Christ in the high and late Middle Ages,[59] Taylor's suggestion of such 'sacred associations' and antlers appended to the hall's gables in—as Taylor seems to imply—a pre-Christian Germanic context is not based on any compelling evidence.[60] The imagery of the hart occurs elsewhere in *Beowulf* when Hrothgar describes the mere of Grendel and his mother by deploying the 'inexpressibility *topos*' of the *heorot hornum trum*, 'strong-antlered hart' (1369a), which, pursued by hounds, would rather expire on the water's edge than go into the water of the mere, a fitting metaphor for Hrothgar's own reluctance, or inability, to deal with the problem of Grendel and his mother.[61] Finally, the roof of Heorot is twice described as *goldfah*, 'gold-adorned' (308, 1800): when the Geats approach Heorot for the first time and again during the speeches following Beowulf's triumph over Grendel's mother. Despite Karl Wentersdorf's comment that the golden roof is '[t]he only surprising aspect of the depiction of Heorot', John Niles, following Rosemary Cramp, suggests that the reference to Heorot's gold roof indicates that 'it literally shines with gold', noting the amount

scholars have previously understood Sigurðr's alias *gǫfuct dýr*, 'noble creature', in *Fáfnismál*, 'The Sayings of Fáfnir', stanza 2/1 as 'noble deer'; the first to do so was the aptly named V.B. Hjort in his translation of the *Poetic Edda*, *Den gamle Edda eller Oldemo'r* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1865), p. 203; however, for a refutation of such a hypothesis, see Kari Ellen Gade, 'Sigurðr – *Gǫfuct dýr*: A Note on *Fáfnismál* St. 2', *ANF*, 105 (1990), 57–68 (pp. 58–61).

[58] Taylor, 'Heorot, Earth, and Asgard', p. 128, n. 23.

[59] Cf. The legend of St Eustace, recorded in the *Legenda aurea* (and elsewhere), according to which Eustace converts to Christianity after seeing a vision of the crucifixion between the antlers of a stag that he was hunting; see David Farmer, *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, 5th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 187. It was also an important animal in Celtic tradition, hunted, for instance, by Pwyll in the First Branch of the *Mabinogi*; see James MacKillop, *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 346. The Old Norse Christian poem *Sólarljóð*, 'Song of the Sun', stanza 55/1 refers to Christ as *sólar hjǫrt*, 'the hart of the sun'; see '*Sólarljóð*', ed. by Carolyne Larrington and Peter Robinson, in *Poetry on Christian Subjects*, ed. by Margaret Clunies Ross, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages, 7 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 334–5. The white stag, of course, later became the symbol of Richard II of England (r. 1377–99).

[60] However, writing to Heahfrith in the 680s, Aldhelm did commend the construction of buildings for Christian worship where formerly the snake and the stag had been worshipped at a pagan shrine; see Aldhelm, *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. by Rudolf Ehwald, 2 vols, MHG (Berlin: Weidmann, 1913–1919), II (1919), p. 489, translated in *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, trans. by Lapidge and Herren, pp. 160–1.

[61] Taylor, 'Heorot, Earth, and Asgard', p. 127; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 156. On this *topos*, see the discussion in Chapter 4, and references there.

of gold in circulation in fifth- and sixth-century Scandinavia as well as 'the airy thinness to which gold can be beaten', though he does concede that his interpretation of *goldfah* in this context is only a 'supposition'.[62] Whatever the case may be, this description of the hall's exterior reflects not only the embroidered tapestries of its inner walls—*Goldfag scinon / web æfter wagum*, 'Gold-adorned, the tapestries shone along the walls' (994b–5a)—but is also corroborated by *goldsele*, 'gold-hall' (715, 1253, 1639, 2083), which is *fættum fahne*, 'adorned with (gold?) plates' (716a), *golde fahne*, 'adorned with gold' (927a), and *betlic ond banfag*, 'splendid and ivory-adorned' (780a), with its *medubenc monig... / golde geregnad*, 'many mead-benches trimmed with gold' (776–7a).[63] It is also fitting given Hrothgar's distribution of gold to his retainers as a *goldwine*, 'gold-friend' (1171, 1476, 1602), and the description of both Wealhtheow and Freawaru as *goldhroden*, 'gold-adorned' (640b, 2025a). Something which does not seem to have been considered by previous commentators is that these references to a 'golden' roof and the 'bright' hall (997a, 1177a) may have their origins in the possibility that royal halls were 'brightly painted'.[64] Since Heorot exists only in the realm of poetry and not reality, though, we need not find it in the least troubling that the hall is described as having a gold roof, or, indeed, anything else trimmed with gold and thereby rendered perhaps overly extravagant. The *Beowulf*-poet's knowledge of the past was, as Tolkien put it, 'rich and poetical rather than accurate with the accuracy of modern archaeology (such as that is)'.[65] The simple fact remains that this image of a golden hall corresponds, fittingly, with the sharing of gold and wealth within the hall and thus with the hall's—and Hrothgar's—superlative status.

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[62] Wentersdorf, 'Vision of Heorot', p. 413; but Niles, '*Beowulf* and Lejre', p. 171, and n. 5; and Cramp, 'The Hall in *Beowulf* and in Archaeology', pp. 339–40.
[63] NB This is 'gold-hall' either in the sense of 'the hall where gold is distributed' or 'the hall made of/adorned with gold'. See Bosworth–Toller, s.v. *goldsele*; and *DOE*, s.v. *goldsele*.
[64] Blair, p. 123. It could, of course, also refer to golden-yellow thatching.
[65] Tolkien, 'The Monsters and the Critics', p. 22. In contrast to Tolkien's misgivings expressed in 1936, 'the accuracy of modern archaeology' has only been refined in the decades since. For an up-to-date overview of the relationship between literary and archaeological evidence in particular from Anglo-Saxon England, see John Hines, 'Literary Sources and Archaeology', in *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, ed. by Helena Hamerow, David A. Hinton, and Sally Crawford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 968–85.

In various passages mentioning Heorot (named nineteen times in *Beowulf*), its standing as a superlative example of a dwelling is emphasised.[66] It is referred to as *husa selest*, 'the best of houses', four times in the poem (*Beo* 146a, 285b, 658b, 935a), and *reced selesta*, 'the best hall' (412a), as well as *foremærost foldbuendum / receda under roderum*, 'for land-dwellers the most famous of halls under the heavens' (309–10a).[67] Of such superlatives, A. Leslie Harris remarks that they 'not only point out what is admirable in this society and its values but also show its separateness, its distance, from the world of the poet'.[68] Trilling's 'aesthetics of nostalgia' are plainly on display in such descriptions of Heorot: this is how things were *then*, and not necessarily how they are now. In a similar way, the poet of *Daniel* describes Babylon using a string of superlatives, whilst in the same breath alluding to its destruction in lines 691–99 of the poem: *Þæt wæs þara fæstna folcum cuðost, / mæst and mærost þara þe men bun, / Babilon burga*, 'Of those fortresses [and] cities which people inhabit, Babylon was the best known to people, the greatest and most famous' (*Dan* 69–3a). The contrast of the city's superlative status with its inhabitants' enemies coming *to þære heahbyrig / þæt hie Babilone abrecan mihton*, 'to that high city so that they might destroy Babylon' (688b–9), also mirrors the description of Heorot's height and the foreshadowing of the hall's demise in *Beowulf* 81b–3a, underscoring that however outstanding a place may be during its halcyon days, it, like everything else on earth, is transient.[69] Nevertheless, as long as it remains standing, Heorot is presented as both a figurative and a literal beacon for human society and good kingship: on the

[66] At lines 78b, 166b, 403a, 432b, 475a, 497a, 593a, 766b, 991b, 1017b, 1176b, 1267b, 1279a, 1302a, 1330a, 1588a, 1671b, 1990a, and 2099a; just eight other places are named and only once or twice each as noted by Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 172.
[67] Garner, 'Returning to Heorot', p. 166; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 241. Cf. Beowulf's own hall which is described as *bolda selest*, 'best of dwellings' (*Beo* 2326a).
[68] Harris, 'Litotes and Superlatives', p. 1. Harris, p. 10, also points out that references to Heorot in the superlative 'ironically' anticipate its fate to be burnt down, and notes that images of its 'stand[ing] empty before Grendel's depredations' destabilise the notion that it really is 'the best of houses'. In contrast to Heorot, Hrothgar exclaims litotically of Grendel and his mother's abode, *nis þæt heoru stow*, 'that is not a pleasant place!' (*Beo* 1372b), effectively a superlative signalling that this is actually the *worst* of places, corroborating Harris's claim (p. 8) that superlatives are often 'only the opposite side of the coin' to litotes.
[69] Neville, pp. 83–4.

Geats' approach to the hall (*Beo* 306b–14b), not only is Heorot 'for land-dwellers the foremost of halls', but, in a hyperbolic turn of phrase, *Lixte se leoma ofer landa fela*, 'The light [of the hall] shone over many lands' (311). Whether this light is reflected from the hall's purportedly golden roof or whether it emanates from the fireplace within is moot: importantly, both this line and those descriptions of the hall's golden roof symbolise the hall's status. Likewise, the light of the hall is noted even after it has been badly damaged in Grendel's fight with Beowulf—*Wæs þæt beorhte bold tobrocen swiðe*, 'That bright dwelling was greatly damaged' (997)—and alluded to by Wealhtheow in her address to Beowulf—*Heorot is gefælsod, / beahsele beorhta*, 'Heorot is cleansed, the bright ring-hall' (1176b–7a).[70] Clearly, the superlative image of Heorot presented here and throughout the poem is an arresting one, but its impressive appearance means nothing if this is not corroborated by who resides, and what happens, in it—attacks from external threats, of course, notwithstanding. As William Helder sums it up, 'Heorot calls to mind an ideal society. The poet consistently presents it as a symbol of perfection.'[71]

The Hall and the Ideal Society

If social space is, as Lefebvre contended, 'a social product', then the society which occupies Heorot is a very good example of this. The 'ideal society' evoked by Helder is embodied in the notion of the Germanic *comitatus*, 'retinue', a band of *comites*, 'companions, retainers, earls'—typically *gesiðas* or *þegnas* in Old English[72]—most famously described by Tacitus in his first-century *Germania* 13–15, according to which it is a sign of

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[70] Cf. *Ruin* 21a *Beorht wæron burgræced*, 'Bright were the city dwellings (or halls)'.
[71] Helder, 'The Song of Creation', p. 253.
[72] On the use of this and similar terms, see H.R. Loyn, 'Gesiths and Thegns in Anglo-Saxon England from the Seventh to the Tenth Century', *English Historical Review*, 70 (1955), 529–49; Alan T. Thacker, 'Some Terms for Noblemen in Anglo-Saxon England, c. 650–900', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, 2 (1981), 201–36; and Barbara A.E. Yorke, 'The Vocabulary of Anglo-Saxon Overlordship', *Anglo-Saxon Studies*

> haec dignitas, hae vires magno semper electorum iuvenum globo circumdari in pace decus, in bello praesidium. nec solum in sua gente cuique, sed apud finitimas quoque civitates id nomen, ea gloria est, si numero ac virtute comitatus emineat.
>
> [both esteem and power [to be] always surrounded by a large body of selected youths, in times of peace an honour and in war a protection. It is [a source of] renown and fame not only amongst his (i.e. a chief's) own people, but also before neighbouring tribes, if the *comitatus* stands out in terms of its size and courage.][73]

Whilst, as Jane Toswell has rightly warned, one should be wary of extrapolating from classical descriptions of Continental Germanic tribes by a first-century Roman senator and historian in a discussion of Old English poetry, this generic statement about the Germanic *comitatus* does tally closely with depictions of the relationship between a lord and his retainers in *Beowulf*.[74] As if echoing the words of Tacitus, the poem's opening, for instance, relates how a young prince should ensure *þæt hine on ylde eft gewunigen / wilgesiþas, þonne wig cume, / leode gelæsten; lofdædum sceal / in mægþa gehwære man geþeon*, 'that later in old age [his] close companions stand by him when war comes, [his] people serve him; with praiseworthy deeds will one flourish amongst every nation' (*Beo* 22–5). The significance of a lord's choice of

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in Archaeology and History, 2 (1981), 171–200. For a general list of words for 'retainer' in *Beowulf*, see *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 316.

[73] Cornelius Tacitus, *Germania*, in *Cornelii Taciti Opera Minora*, ed. by M. Winterbottom and R.M. Ogilvie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 44. See also *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. 308–9.

[74] M.J. Toswell, 'Tacitus, Old English Heroic Poetry, and Ethnographic Preconceptions', in *Studies in English Language and Literature: 'Doubt Wisely' – Papers in Honor of E.G. Stanley*, ed. by M.J. Toswell and Elizabeth M. Tyler (Abingdon: Routledge, 1996), pp. 493–507. Cf., however, the editors' revealing comment in *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. c: 'The poem is an invaluable fund of information relating to Germanic antiquities'. On the *comitatus* more generally, see E.A. Thompson, *The Early Germans* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), pp. 48–60; John Lindow, *Comitatus, Individual and Honor: Studies in North Germanic Institutional Vocabulary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); M.J. Enright, *Lady with a Mead Cup: Ritual, Prophecy, and Lordship in the European Warband from La Tène to the Viking Age* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), pp. 1–37; Dennis H. Green, *Language and History in the Early Germanic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 84–120; and John M. Hill, 'Comitatus', in *The Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature in Britain*, ed. by Siân Echard and others, 4 vols (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2017), II, s.v. *comitatus*; and in Old English poetry specifically, see Clemoes, *Interactions of Thought*, pp. 7–9; Leslie Stratyner, 'Forged Ties: The "comitatus" and Anglo-Saxon Poetry' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College, 1991), esp. pp. 13–89; and Paul Battles, '"Contending Throng" Scenes and the Comitatus Ideal in Old English Poetry, with Special Attention to *The Battle of Maldon* 122a', *SN*, 83 (2011), 41–53.

gesiðas is stressed throughout the poem, but nowhere is the importance of the *comitatus* demonstrated more poignantly than when Beowulf's men desert him in his fight against the dragon, except, of course, for Wiglaf, whose '*comitatus* speech' in lines 2633–60 testifies to his loyalty to Beowulf.[75] An exemplary account of the loyalty of thegns to their lord, in both life and death, is found in the entry for 755 (757) of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, in which Cynewulf's thegns, having failed to save their lord, reject the offer of service under their lord's slayer, the *æþeling* Cyneheard, and so are themselves slain.[76] One might also call to mind here the rousing speeches of Byrhtnoth's loyal, if doomed, retainers in *The Battle of Maldon* 205–319 (most famously that of Byrhtwold), which make for a stark contrast with the cowardice of Odda's three sons in abandoning the battlefield mounted on the horse of their deceased lord in lines 185–97. As these examples show, the principal *loci* of the *comitatus* in *Beowulf*, and indeed throughout the Old English corpus, are on the battlefield and, most significantly in this discussion, in the hall, such that, according to Garner, 'Heorot's social significance and its physical characteristics […] are inextricable, mutually reinforcing associative links between *comitatus* ideals and a specific set of architectural features'. These links are particularly underscored, according to Garner, by the proximity of descriptions of the hall as *horngeap* (82a) and *hornreced* (704a) and of lordly or heroic actions.[77] It is less these specific architectural features which serve as such 'associative links' between the *comitatus* and the hall, however, as it is the ensemble of social interactions—or 'social practice', to use

[75] *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. lxxxviii, 316. On this passage, see Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 256–64, esp. 261–3, who also suggests that there might be a note of tacit criticism of Beowulf here, especially in light of Wiglaf's more overtly critical speech in lines 3077–84a. See also Clemoes, *Interactions of Thought*, pp. 412–16; and Norman E. Eliason, 'Beowulf, Wiglaf and the Wægmundings', *ASE*, 7 (1978), 95–105. For a controversial and highly speculative study concerning, albeit only loosely, the relationship between Beowulf and Wiglaf, see Richard North, *The Origins of Beowulf: From Vergil to Wiglaf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); cf., however, Michael Lapidge's highly critical review in *Reviews in History* (2007) <https://reviews.history.ac.uk/review/617> [accessed 26 November 2020].

[76] For the 'A' text, see *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, A Collaborative Edition*, ed. by David Dumville and Simon Keynes, 23 vols (Cambridge: Brewer, 1983—), III: *MS A*, ed. by Janet M. Bately (1986), pp. 36–7, translated in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, trans. by Michael Swanton (London: Phoenix, 2000), pp. 46–8.

[77] Garner, 'Returning to Heorot', pp. 165–6, at 165, and *Structuring Spaces*, pp. 47–8. Cf. similar descriptions in *Fin* 1, 4b.

Lefebvre's term—which take place within the hall's walls, as Garner acknowledges.[78] Indeed, as Sisam says of the social practices described in Heorot, 'all were *in place* there', and, moreover, they are encoded spatially in a number of the epithets used of the hall.[79]

What, then, are the spatial practices of the *comitatus*-based society depicted in *Beowulf*, which are allegedly encapsulated in epithets for the hall? Chief amongst those social practices which take place in the hall—as opposed to those which occur elsewhere but which are recounted in the hall—are drinking, speech-making and boasting, and the sharing out of treasure.[80] These might all be subsumed under the overarching rubric of 'feasting', despite the fact that food is seldom at the centre of the *symbel*, which is notionally translated as 'feast' or 'banquet'.[81] Feasting, according to Magennis, is made up of ten quite varied 'constituent motifs', especially in *Beowulf*, namely: 'drinking, the hall setting, the dignity and nobility of the participants, the attendance of serving stewards, music, the giving of gifts, the presence of women, the physical splendour of the scene, rejoicing and speeches'.[82] The mere 'presence' of women, however, hardly seems to be a criterion worthy of comment; rather, the role specifically of aristocratic women—as 'peace-weavers', 'cup-bearers', 'treasure-dispensers'

[78] Lefebvre, p. 33; Garner, 'Returning to Heorot', p. 158, and *Structuring Spaces*, pp. 46–7.
[79] Kenneth Sisam, *The Structure of Beowulf* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), pp. 7–9, at 8 (emphasis added). On the importance and ambiguity of epithets in *Beowulf*, especially for God, see Fred C. Robinson, *Beowulf and the Appositive Style* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), pp. 34–43; and on epithets for people, see Paul Beekman Taylor, 'The Epithetical Style of *Beowulf*', *NM*, 91, 2 (1990), 195–206.
[80] On drinking, see Hugh Magennis, 'The *Beowulf* Poet and His *druncne dryhtguman*', *NM*, 86 (1985), 159–64, and *Images of Community*, pp. 51–9; and on drinking's sometimes deadly consequences, see Paul Battles, 'Dying for a Drink: "Sleeping after the Feast" Scenes in *Beowulf*, *Andreas*, and the Old English Poetic Tradition', *MP*, 112 (2015), 435–57. On speech-making and boasting, see Brian A. Shaw, 'The Speeches in *Beowulf*: A Structural Study', *Chaucer Review*, 13 (1978), 86–92; Peter Baker, 'Beowulf the Orator', *Journal of English Linguistics*, 21 (1988), 3–23; Robert E. Bjork, 'Speech as Gift in *Beowulf*', *Speculum*, 69 (1994), 192–212; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 203–37; Susan M. Kim, '"As Once I Did with Grendel": Boasting and Nostalgia in *Beowulf*', *MP*, 103 (2005), 4–7; and Marie Nelson, '*Beowulf*'s Boast Words', *Neophilologus*, 89 (2005), 299–310. On the sharing out of treasure, see John M. Hill, 'Beowulf and the Danish Succession: Gift Giving as Occasion for Complex Gesture', *Medievalia et Humanistica*, n.s. 11 (1982), 177–97; Jos Bazelmans, 'Beyond Power: Ceremonial Exchanges in Beowulf', in *Rituals of Power: From Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by Frans Theuws and Janet L. Nelson (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 311–75; and Leslie Webster, 'Ideal and Reality: Versions of Treasure in the Early Anglo-Saxon World', in *Treasure in the Medieval West*, ed. by Elizabeth M. Tyler (York: York Medieval Press, 2000), pp. 49–60.
[81] Sisam, *Structure of Beowulf*, p. 8.
[82] Magennis, *Images of Community*, p. 62. On feasting in Old English poetry and specifically in *Beowulf*, see esp. pp. 42–48, 62–69; for an analogous view of feasting in Old Norse poetry, especially in *Atlakviða*, see pp. 48–51.

and, elsewhere, as mourners—is integral to the smooth functioning of social activity both in the hall and without, a fact addressed in *Maxims I* 83b–91 and in the considerable body of literature treating these roles.[83] Nonetheless, the motifs which I have singled out above, namely drinking, speech-making, and gift-giving (and other related communal activities), are most strongly associated with the hall, and undergird the relationship between a lord and his retainers.[84] In the opening lines of *Beowulf* cited at the beginning of this chapter (viz. lines 67b–85), the communal aspects of the hall are acknowledged explicitly, especially drinking and the sharing out of treasure: the hall is *medoærn micel*, 'a great mead-hall' (69a), and *folcstede*, 'the folk-dwelling' or 'the dwelling of the people' (76a),[85] where Hrothgar *beagas dælde, / sinc æt symle*, 'shared out rings, / treasure at the feast' (80b–1a). Human social space and the place in which it is enacted are both instituted by such activities and maintained through the repetition of them. The reader's attention, moreover, is repeatedly drawn to the communal nature of the construction and subsequent use of the hall: Hrothgar commands his people to construct the hall (67b–9), in which he will share out all that God gives him *geongum ond ealdum*, 'to young and old' (72a); he once again orders work for *manigre mægþe*, 'many people' (75a), until it comes to pass that *ædre mid yldum*, 'promptly amongst men' (77a), the hall is ready for their lord, and for themselves. That Hrothgar intends to use the hall for

[83] On these roles, see, e.g., L. John Sklute, '"Freoðuwebbe" in Old English Poetry', *NM*, 71 (1970), 534–41; Michael J. Enright, 'Lady with a Mead-Cup: Ritual, Group Cohesion and Hierarchy in the Germanic Warband', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 22, 1 (1988), 170–203; and Helen Bennett, 'The Female Mourner at Beowulf's Funeral: Filling in the Blanks/Hearing the Spaces', *Exemplaria*, 4 (1992), 35–50. For more recent overviews and bibliographies, see Clare A. Lees, 'At a Crossroads: Old English and Feminist Criticism', in *Reading Old English Texts*, ed. by Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 146–69; Magennis, *Images of Community*, pp. 106–14; Alexandra Hennessey Olsen, 'Gender Roles', in *A Beowulf Handbook*, ed. by Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), pp. 311–24; and Helen Scheck and Virginia Blanton, 'Women', in *A Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Studies*, ed. by Jacqueline Stodnick and Renée R. Trilling (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 265–80.

[84] Indeed, as Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 216, n. 47, notes, of the thirty speeches in the first part of the poem, eighteen take place inside Heorot, whilst only two out of nine occur inside in the second part (after Beowulf's return to Geatland).

[85] Cf. Beowulf's own hall which is referred to as *leoda fæsten*, 'stronghold of the people' (*Beo* 2333b).

communal activities is clear, since upon its completion *He beot ne aleh*, 'He did not leave his promise unfulfilled' (80a), and he distributes treasure to his men accordingly.

In addition to the epithets *medoærn* and *folcstede*, moreover, Heorot is referred to by some fourteen other different epithets which describe the hall's social functions, as well as five other general epithets. Concerning drinking in the hall, Heorot is described as *beorsele*, 'beer-hall' (482a, 492a; cf. 1094a where it is used of the Frisians' hall, and 2635a of Beowulf's own hall), *medoærn*, 'mead-hall' (69a), *medoheal*(*l*), 'mead-hall' (484a, 638a),[86] and *winærn* (654a), *winreced* (714b, 993b), and *winsele* (695a, 771b; cf. 2456a, used of a rhetorical hall in one of Beowulf's speeches), all three of which mean 'wine-hall'. In terms of gift-giving, Heorot is called *beahsele*, '(arm-)ring hall' (1177a; cf. *And* 1657a, and *beaggyfa*, 'ring-giver' [*Beo* 1102a], in reference to Hrothgar), *gifheal*(*l*), 'gift-hall' (838a; cf. *gifstol*, 'gift-stool', at 168a, 2327a), *goldsele*, 'gold-hall' (715a, 1253a, 1639a, and 2083a), *hordburh*, 'hoard-stronghold' (467a; cf. *Gen* 2007b), and *hringsele*, 'ring-hall' (2010a; cf. *Beo* 2840a and 3053a where it is used of the dragon's treasure-filled dwelling). It is also worth noting the epithet *goldwine*, 'gold-friend' (*Beo* 1171a, 1476a, 1602a, 2419a, 2584a), which denotes Hrothgar and later Beowulf, and mirrors the references to Heorot as a *goldsele*, underscoring further the link between a lord, his retainers, and his hall.[87] Much as *folcstede* (76a) singles out the hall as the place of the people, three more epithets gesture towards the nobility of the hall and the people who interact within its walls, highlighting the social importance of the hall for a lord and the *gesiðas* in his *comitatus*: *dryhtsele*, 'retainers' hall' or 'noble hall' (485a, 767a; and 2320a of the dragon's dwelling), *gestsele*, 'guest-hall' or 'retainers' hall' (994a), and *þryðærn*, 'mighty hall' (657a). In contrast, *guðsele*, 'battle hall' (443a; and 2139a, by emendation), is one of the few epithets to acknowledge the afflictions visited upon Heorot, which, if one adopts the widely

[86] Cf. *meduseld*, 'mead-hall' (3065b, used of a narratorial rhetorical mead-hall), *meodosetl*, 'mead-seats' (5b; cf. *ealubenc*, 'ale-bench' [1029a; 2867a]), and *medostig*, 'mead-path' (924a), and *meodowong*, 'mead-plain' (1643b), which refer to the path to and plain around the mead-hall of Heorot, discussed in Chapter 4.
[87] Donoghue, p. 35.

accepted emendation in line 2139a, are reciprocated by Beowulf when he attacks Grendel's mother in her dwelling.[88] Of the remaining epithets, two, already discussed above, refer to Heorot's physical appearance—*heahsele*, 'high hall' (647a), and *hornreced*, 'horn-(gabled-) hall' (704a)—and two more, 'tautologous' in their repetitiousness, 'appear to mean merely "hall-hall"': *healærn* (78a) and *healreced* (68a), which both occur in the poem's opening description of Heorot (*Beo* 67b–85).[89] Whilst some of these epithets describe the hall as a building, the clear majority of these epithets encapsulate the hall's significance as a place of communal activity and especially as a place where the bonds between Hrothgar and the members of his *comitatus* are strengthened.[90] The hall has even been viewed by some critics as 'semi-sacral', a 'ritual space', and a 'holy' place.[91] Nonetheless, whilst it is true that the hall is 'a place of safety, joy, and art', in Nicole Discenza's words, this is a place which also attracts 'threats from outsiders, threats from within, and threats from time'.[92] The threats from outsiders are distilled into the notion of the *guðsele* (443a), whilst the threats from both within and without are alluded to in lines 82b–5 (*heaðowylma bad, / laðan liges*, etc. '[the hall] awaited battle-surges, hostile flame…') which gesture towards the affinal feud between the Danes and the Heathobards resulting in the burning of Heorot and the rout of the Heathobards.[93] As for threats from time, although the narrator predicts that Heorot will eventually be destroyed, the agent of its destruction is not time itself but 'hostile flame'.

Despite Heorot's ultimate fate, this assortment of epithets neatly demonstrates that Heorot, like the hall in more general terms, is significant not simply for its physical features,

[88] See the *apparatus criticus* in *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 72.
[89] Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 72.
[90] Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, p. 185; Hume, 'The Concept of the Hall', p. 64.
[91] Niles, '*Beowulf* and Lejre', p. 177; Earl, 'The Role of the Men's Hall', p. 139; and Enright, 'Lady with a Mead-Cup', p. 174.
[92] Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, p. 184.
[93] This feud is predicted by Beowulf in lines 2024b–69a and alluded to in *Widsith* 45–9. On the feud and the 'Ingeld story' more generally, see Adrien Bonjour, *The Digressions in Beowulf*, Medium Ævum Monographs, 5 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1950), pp. 44–6; Irving, *Reading of Beowulf*, pp. 174–9; *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. lv–lvii; and Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 240–4.

but for its important role in ensuring social cohesion. The bond between a lord or king and his retainers is encapsulated in the language used to describe the one immovable place where their relationship manifests itself.[94] In addition, Heorot is marked out as a superlative instance of a royal hall for its large size, physical features, golden adornments, and the verbal superlatives used to describe it. Nevertheless, in spite of the safety that Heorot is meant to afford its occupants, that it becomes a *guðsele* and is finally burnt to the ground reveals that even the chief human place in the Old English poetic tradition is not invulnerable to damage and destruction. The most striking instance of time's deleterious effects on architectural structures, though, is to be found in *The Ruin*. Where Heorot's future demise is neatly, and fleetingly, counterposed with the impressive account of its construction,[95] *The Ruin* similarly unsettles ideas around the permanence of place, and complements the several poems engaging with notions of space and place throughout the preceding folios of the Exeter Book (which are treated at length in the next chapter).

The Ruin *and the mutability of place*

If critics of *Beowulf* have wondered where the 'real' Heorot was built, one of the recurring questions addressed in scholarly criticism of *The Ruin* is where on the island of Britain the ruined settlement depicted in the poem is to be located. Although there is a broad consensus that the place described is the former Roman city of Bath, both Chester and Hadrian's Wall have also been proposed as possible candidates.[96] *The Ruin* has also been analysed in terms of

[94] The main movable such location is the battlefield, to which it is necessarily harder to attach meaningful epithets denoting the social bonds between a lord and his retainers.
[95] Bonjour, *The Digressions in Beowulf*, pp. 44–5.
[96] The baths themselves are described in lines 38–46 of the poem as it has survived. The first study to seriously put forward the case for Bath was John Earle, 'An Ancient Saxon Poem of a City in Ruins, Supposed to be Bath', *Proceedings of the Bath Natural History and Antiquities Field Club*, 2 (1870–73), 259–70. See also Cecilia A. Hotchner, *Wessex and Old English Poetry, with Special Consideration of "The Ruin"* (New York: published privately, 1939); *Three Old English Elegies: The Wife's Lament, The Husband's Message, The Ruin*, ed. by Roy F. Leslie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1961; repr. 1966), pp. 22–8; and *The Exeter*

its purported scriptural allusions and Christian morality, and it has been identified with Babylon, interpreted as a 'body-city riddle', and viewed as either an *encomium urbis* (cf. *Durham*) or an example of the *topos* of the *excidium urbis*.[97] If the crumbling city of *The Ruin* has anything in common with the city of Babylon, it is, according to John D. Niles, the 'moral failings' of its inhabitants, who are said to have been *wlonc ond wingal*, 'proud and wine-wanton' (34a), just as Babylon and its citizens, as depicted in *Daniel* and *Azarias*, are brought down by God because of Nebuchadnezzar's 'overweening pride'.[98] Nonetheless, whatever the likelihood that the poem depicts Bath, Anne Thompson Lee insists, with some justification, that 'surely the actual location of the poem is at best peripheral to our understanding of it'.[99] Whether, moreover, the poem can rightly be considered a member of the loose group of so-called 'elegies' found throughout the Exeter Book (Exeter Cathedral Library, MS 3501), it is above all else—like *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* in particular—a meditation on the

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Anthology of Old English Poetry: An Edition of Exeter Dean and Chapter MS 3501, ed. by Bernard J. Muir, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2000), II, p. 699. On Anglo-Saxon reflections of the Roman past, see Nicholas Howe, *Writing the Map*, pp. 75–124; Michael Hunter, 'Germanic and Roman Antiquity and the Sense of the Past in Anglo-Saxon England,' *ASE*, 3 (1974), 29–50 (pp. 35–44); and of the prehistoric past, see Sarah Semple, *Perceptions of the Prehistoric in Anglo-Saxon England: Religion, Ritual, and Rulership in the Landscape* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[97] See respectively Karl P. Wentersdorf, 'Observations on *The Ruin*', *Medium Ævum*, 46 (1977), 171–80; Arnold V. Talentino, 'Moral Irony in *The Ruin*', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 14 (1978), 3–10; Hugh T. Keenan, '*The Ruin* as Babylon', *Tennessee Studies in Literature*, 11 (1966), 109–17; and William Johnson, '*The Ruin* as Body-City Riddle', *Philological Quarterly*, 59 (1980), 397–411. Note that Keenan's argument is roundly rejected by Daniel G. Calder, 'Perspective and Movement in *The Ruin*', *NM*, 72 (1971), 442–5 (p. 442); James F. Doubleday, '*The Ruin*: Structure and Theme', *JEGP*, 71 (1972), 369–81 (pp. 369–70); and Anne Thompson Lee, '*The Ruin*: Bath or Babylon? A Non-archaeological Investigation', *NM*, 74 (1973), 443–55 (p. 443). That the similar imagery and reference to *enta geweorc* in *The Wanderer* might reflect the fall of Babylon, see Peter J. Frankis, 'The Thematic Significance of *enta geweorc* and Related Imagery in *The Wanderer*', *ASE*, 2 (1973), 253–69 (esp. pp. 260–9). The view that *The Ruin* is either an *encomium urbis* or an instance of the *excidium urbis topos* is discussed in Jan Čermák, 'The Old English *Ruin* and *Durham*: Some Reflections on Literary Topology', *Germanistica Pragensia*, 17 (2003), 7–14; David R. Howlett, 'Two Old English Encomia', *ES*, 57 (1976), 289–93 (pp. 291–2); Kathryn Hume, 'The "Ruin Motif" in Old English Poetry', *Anglia*, 94 (1976), 339–60; Thompson Lee, 'Bath or Babylon', pp. 443–55; and Wentersdorf, 'Observations on *The Ruin*', pp. 172–3. On the poem's possible biblical and Latinate sources and analogues, see Christopher Abram, 'In Search of Lost Time: Aldhelm and *The Ruin*', *Quaestio*, 1 (2000), 23–44; *Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, II, p. 705; and Andy Orchard, 'Reconstructing *The Ruin*', pp. 54–8.

[98] John D. Niles, *God's Exiles and English Verse: On the Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2019), pp. 225, 189. See also Doubleday, 'Structure and Theme', pp. 378–9; and, in the context of *The Seafarer*, F.N.M. Diekstra, '*The Seafarer* 58–66a. The Flight of the Exiled Soul to its Fatherland', *Neophilologus*, 55 (1971), 433–46 (p. 437); and Frederick S. Holton, 'Old English Sea Imagery and the Interpretation of *The Seafarer*', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 12 (1982), 208–17 (p. 214).

[99] Lee, 'Bath or Babylon?', pp. 443–4; cf. Howe, *Writing the Map*, p. 86.

transience of earthly things, be they life itself or the places where we, or our predecessors, have lived.[100] Indeed, Klinck observes that the city depicted in *The Ruin* develops the Latinate theme *sic transit gloria mundi*, 'thus passes the glory of the world'.[101] Such a motif is to be found, for instance, in Alcuin's *De rerum humanarum vicissitudine et clade Lindisfarnensis monasterii* 37–8: *Roma, caput mundi, mundi decus, aurea Roma, / Nunc remanet tantum saeva ruina tibi*, 'Rome, capital of the world, glory of the world, golden Rome, / Now of you remains only a savage ruin'.[102] Augustinian echoes—especially of the first five books of *De civitate Dei*, which treat the sack of Rome—are detectable in Alcuin's note of lament here. More recently, Niles has argued that the imagery in *The Ruin*, as in *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, likewise 'relies implicitly on the Augustinian antithesis of the City of Man [*sic*] versus the City of God'.[103] The passing of the glory of the world, or the Earthly City, is reflected in what remains of the decayed city in *The Ruin*. As Roy F. Leslie notes, moreover, it is these ruins that make this 'a poem whose central theme is the atmosphere of place'.[104] This spatial aspect of the poem has also been stressed by William Johnson, according to whom the poem's language focuses on 'processes through which space is significantly shaped for human dwelling and then destroyed'.[105] It has already been shown above how this same phenomenon is evident, albeit only briefly, in *Beowulf* 82b–3a, but where in *Beowulf* the poem's focus is chiefly on the creation of place, the emphasis in *The Ruin* is, rather, on the mutability, and instability, of place.

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[100] Stanley B. Greenfield, 'The Old English Elegies', in *Continuations and Beginnings: Studies in Old English Literature*, ed. by Eric G. Stanley (London: Nelson, 1966), pp. 143–4. Several scholars exclude *The Ruin* from the group of elegiac poems, e.g. Lee, 'Bath or Babylon?', p. 454; Alain Renoir, 'The Old English Ruin: Contrastive Structure and Affective Impact', in *The Old English Elegies: New Essays in Criticism and Research*, ed. by Martin Green (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983), p. 153; and Benno J. Timmer, 'The Elegiac Mood in Old English Poetry', *ES*, 24 (1942), 33–44 (p. 34). For a discussion of whether the elegies constitute a more-or-less coherent group, see Chapter 2.
[101] *The Old English Elegies: A Critical Edition and Genre Study*, ed. by Anne L. Klinck (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), p. 62.
[102] Alcuin, 'Alcuini (Albini) Carmina', in *Poetae latini aevi Carolini*, I, p. 230. See Fell, 'Perceptions of Transience', pp. 186–7; and *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, pp. 232–3.
[103] Niles, *God's Exiles*, pp. 188–9. See also Doubleday, 'Structure and Theme', pp. 370–6. Both *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* are discussed at length in the next chapter.
[104] *Three Old English Elegies*, ed. by Leslie, p. 28.
[105] Johnson, '*The Ruin* as Body-City Riddle', p. 398.

What follows is an analysis of how *The Ruin* establishes the 'atmosphere of place' suggested by Leslie, whilst simultaneously undermining that place by detailing its demise.

At the very opening of *The Ruin*, the poem's speaker's ekphrastic contemplation of the ruined city before him elevates it to an almost mythical status:

> Wrætlic is þes wealstan, wyrde gebræcon;
> burgstede burston, brosnað enta geweorc.
> Hrofas sind gehrorene, hreorge torras,
> hr*un*geat berofen,[106] hrim on lime,
> scearde scurbeorge scorene, gedrorene,
> ældo undereotone.
>
> [Wondrous is this wall-stone, events have shattered it;
> the town-steads have fallen apart, the work of giants decays.
> The roofs have collapsed, [and] the ruinous towers,
> the barred gate [is] riven, frost on the cement;
> the gaping storm-protections [are] rent and collapsed,
> undermined by age.] (*Ruin* 1–6a)

Immediately, the *wealstan*, 'wall-stone', is brought into sharp focus by the demonstrative pronoun *þes*, 'this': it is not just any wall but *this* wall before the poem's speaker's eyes, which is *wrætlic*, 'wondrous' (1a), despite the unknown 'events' which have 'shattered it' (*wyrde gebræcon*, 1b). With the passage of time, the town-steads have fallen down, yet are still discernible as *enta geweorc*, 'the work of giants' (2b).[107] Whilst, as Peter Frankis comments, it is possible that this phrase suggests that the ruined buildings 'were erected long ago by superhuman beings', it is more probably a figurative way of referring to the Roman *waldendwyrhtan*, 'master-builders', mentioned in line 7a, in the same way that one might talk

[106] Note that the MS reading, probably due to dittography from both the preceding and following off-verses, is the nonsensical *hrim geat torras*, 'frost gate towers'. See *ASPR*, ed. by Krapp and Dobbie, III, pp. 364–5; *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, p. 209; and *Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, II, p. 700.

[107] Cf. *Beo* 1679a, 2717b, and 2774a; *Wan* 87a; *And* 1235a and 1495a; and *Max II* 2a. See Frankis, 'The Thematic Significance', pp. 253–60. For a discussion of place-names containing the elements *burh* and (*ge*)*weorc*, see John Baker, 'What Makes a Stronghold? Reference to Construction Materials in Place-names in OE *fæsten*, *burh* and (*ge*)*weorc*', in *Sense of Place in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Richard Jones and Sarah Semple (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2012), pp. 316–33.

of 'standing on the shoulders of giants'.[108] That the passage of time is explicitly to blame for the decay is evident in the fact that *scearde scurbeorge*, 'the gaping storm-protections', are *ældo undereotone*, 'undermined by age' (5–6).[109] Here, as in *Andreas* 1494b, Frankis observes, 'storms are a poetic image representing the process of change with the passage of time'.[110] Yet where in *Maxims I* a storm is said to bring the sea and waves up onto the land, the poem states that *Weallas him wiþre healdað*, 'Walls withstand it' (*Max I* 53a), as though to suggest that this is precisely what walls are *meant* to do. Indeed, walls are symbolic in the other surviving collection of *Maxims*, namely, in the commonly identified parallel with the opening two lines of *The Ruin*—and, as Klinck notes, line 16a (*…orþonc*)—in *Maxims II* 1b–3a: *Ceastra beoð feorran gesyne, / orðanc enta geweorc, þa þe on þysse eorðan syndon, / wrætlic weallstana geweorc*, 'Cities are seen from afar, the ingenious work of giants, those that are on this earth, the wondrous work of wall-stones'.[111] Both Christopher Abram and Andy Orchard note that given the probably greater age of *Maxims II*, *The Ruin* would be the 'borrower' in the case of textual borrowing, but whether the lines in *The Ruin* constitute a borrowing is not possible to prove, as Orchard acknowledges.[112] Moreover, that *enta geweorc* occurs on six other occasions in three other poems suggests, rather, that these lines in *The Ruin* and *Maxims II* might simply be drawing on the formulaic word-hoard of Old English poetic tradition, especially given the extensive use of formulaic language throughout *The Ruin*.[113] The only other distinctive phrase in common in these two poems is the collocation of *wrætlic* and *weal*(*l*)*stan*. Perhaps a more

[108] Frankis, 'The Thematic Significance', pp. 254–5, at 255. The expression 'standing on the shoulders of giants' was famously used by Isaac Newton in a letter to Robert Hooke in 1675 but is at least as old as the twelfth century as it is attributed to Bernard of Chartres by John of Salisbury in his *Metalogicon*, Book III: see *The Metalogicon of John of Salisbury: A Twelfth-century Defense of the Verbal and Logical Arts of the Trivium*, trans. by Daniel D. McGarry (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), p. 167.
[109] Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, p. 55.
[110] Frankis, 'The Thematic Significance', pp. 256–7 (at 257). Niles, *God's Exiles*, pp. 26–7, also notes that this 'recurrent imagery […] constitutes one of the leitmotifs' in the poems of the Exeter Book; cf. *Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, II, p. 384. For discussion of this line in *Andreas*, see Chapter 4.
[111] *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, p. 62; *Three Old English Elegies*, ed. by Leslie, p. 67; *Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, II, p. 700; and Orchard, 'Reconstructing *The Ruin*', p. 58.
[112] Abram, 'In Search of Lost Time', p. 39; Orchard, 'Reconstructing *The Ruin*', pp. 58–9.
[113] This formulaic language is comprehensively set out in Orchard, 'Reconstructing *The Ruin*', pp. 63–5.

interesting parallel, though, is to be found in *The Wanderer* 75–80a which uses the motif of crumbling, weather-ravaged buildings to powerful effect, as is discussed in the next chapter.[114]

Whatever the nature of the relationships between these texts, though, the extent of the damage sustained over time in *The Ruin* is reinforced by the remarkable verbal effects and wordplay in these opening lines and throughout the poem. The concatenation of verbs denoting destruction, many of which are repeated, is relentless: *gebræcon*, 'shattered' (Ruin 1b; cf. *gebrocen* [32a]), *burston*, 'fell apart' (2a), *brosnað*, 'decays' (2b; cf. *brosnade* [28a]), *gehrorene*, 'collapsed' (3a), *berofen*, 'riven' (4a), *scorene*, 'rent', and *gedrorene*, 'collapsed' (5b; cf. *gedreas* [11b] and *dreorgiað* [29b]), and *undereotone*, 'undermined' (6a). Further examples include *wonað*, 'wanes', or *worað*, 'totters' (12a),[115] *beag*, 'bent' (17b), and the envelope created by two instances of *crungon*, 'fell' (25a and 28b; cf. *gecrong* [31b]). Daniel Calder has noted, moreover, that the juxtaposition of the present tense and past preterite throughout the poem highlights both the historic destruction which has already come to pass and the ongoing decay which occurs before the poem's speaker's very eyes, such that past and present fold into one another.[116] What is especially notable, though, is the use of internal rhyme, especially in the off-verse, and particularly near the beginning of the poem. Much of the internal rhyme and assonance occurs in the poem's verbs, emphasising the destruction that they describe further still: ***burs**ton* (2a) and ***bros**nað* (2b) through metathesis of *-r-*; *h**rof**as* (3a) and

[114] See *Three Old English Elegies*, ed. by Leslie, p. 30; and Orchard, 'Reconstructing *The Ruin*', pp. 59–60.
[115] On the difficulties presented by the MS readings for line 12, see *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, pp. 211–12. Note that in his edition of what we now call the elegies, *Angelsächsisches Lesebuch*, ed. by Friedrich Kluge (Leipzig: Romberg, 1847), Kluge restored and emended this line to *Wonað giet se* [*wealstan wæp*]*num gehea*[*w*]*en*, a reading followed in *The Exeter Book, Part II: Poems IX–XXXII*, ed. W.S. Mackie, EETS, o.s. 194 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934; repr. 1958), pp. 198–201, but rejected by Wentersdorf, 'Observations on *The Ruin*', pp. 178–9. Orchard, 'Reconstructing *The Ruin*', pp. 66–7, instead suggests *Worað giet se* [*wealsteall wæp*]*num gehea*[*w*]*en*, 'And yet it lasts, that [wall-rampart] cut [with weapons]'.
[116] Daniel G. Calder, 'Perspective and Movement', 442–5 (esp. p. 443). On time and temporality in the poem, see also Patricia Dailey, 'Questions of Dwelling in Anglo-Saxon Poetry and Medieval Mysticism: Inhabiting Landscape, Body, and Mind', *New Medieval Literatures*, 8 (2006), 175–214 (pp. 182–7); Doubleday, 'Structure and Theme', pp. 376–8; Fell, 'Perceptions of Transience', pp. 187–90; Johnson, '*The Ruin* as Body-City Riddle', p. 400; Lee, '*The Ruin*: Bath or Babylon?', pp. 451–2; Orchard, 'Reconstructing *The Ruin*', p. 48; and Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, pp. 49–59.

*be**rof**en* (4a); *geh**r**orene* (3a), *sc**orene** gedr**orene*** (5b), and *forw**eorone** gel**eorone***, ‘perished [and] passed away’ (7b); ***scear**de **scur**beorge **scor**ene*… (5); *st**eap** g**eap***, ‘the high vault’ (11b); and so on.[117] The extent of the damage and decay, moreover, is underscored by the interlinear and double alliteration: of the poem’s thirty-nine intact lines a staggering thirty-three of them (84.6%) contain double alliteration.[118] To take just one example, in lines 3 and 4 the repeated alliteration on *hr-* (or, if the *h-* is not pronounced, simply on *r-*) makes the list of damages inflicted on the roof, towers, gate, and mortar aurally overwhelming.[119] That the related forms *gehrorene* and *hreorge* participate in the alliteration either side of the caesura in line 3 emphasises this further still, as does the cross-alliteration in *ofer harne stan, hate streamas*, ‘over grey stone, hot streams’ (43), and the assonance and extrametrical alliteration on the finite verbs in ***C**rungon **wal**o wide, **c**woman **wol**dagas*, ‘Slaughtered men fell far and wide, days of pestilence came’ (25).[120] Understandably for a poem describing a ruined city, much of the first part of the poem describes the decayed state of various buildings in a sustained meditation on the passing of time: once again, *þæs wag*, ‘*this* wall’ (9b) has endured, *ræghar ond readfah*, ‘lichen-grey and red-stained’ (10a), under various kingdoms, the red staining presumably due to other forms of lichen or the rusting of iron fixtures in the building.[121] Unlike the *steap geap*,

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[117] Lee, ‘*The Ruin*: Bath or Babylon?’, p. 452; Niles, *God’s Exiles*, pp. 155–6; and Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, pp. 52–3. For an overview of rhyme in Old English, see Eric G. Stanley, ‘Rhymes in English Medieval Verse: From Old English to Middle English’, in *Medieval English Studies Presented to George Kane*, ed. by Edward Donald Kennedy, Ronald Waldron, and Joseph S. Wittig (Cambridge: Brewer, 1988), pp. 19–54.

[118] Orchard, ‘Reconstructing *The Ruin*’, p. 50. Cf. B.R. Hutcheson, *Old English Poetic Metre* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1995), p. 271, according to whose calculations based on some 13,000 lines of OE poetry, the average number of lines containing double alliteration is 46% per poem. *The Ruin* contains almost double that.

[119] As Jun Terasawa, *Old English Meter: An Introduction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), p. 15, notes, for the purposes of alliteration, ‘[t]he initial consonant *h-* can be treated as silent’ and ‘a word with initial *h-* could be ambivalent’, as in *Beo* 1975: *Hraðe wæs gerymed, swa se rica bebead*. A similar process is evident at *Riddle* 6.7 and *Riddle* 35.11, in which *hw-* alliterates with *w-*; see *Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, I, p. 33.

[120] On the use of such decorative alliteration in Old English and Anglo-Latin verse, see Andy Orchard, ‘Artful Alliteration in Anglo-Saxon Song and Story’, *Anglia*, 113 (1995), 429–63. The formula ‹ preposition + *harne stan* › is examined further in Chapter 4.

[121] *Three Old English Elegies*, ed. by Leslie, p. 69; Garner, *Structuring Spaces*, pp. 159–60.

‘high vault’, which *gedreas*, ‘has fallen’ (11b), however, the wall has withstood both time and storms and remains standing (11a): perhaps *this* is what makes it *wrætlic*.[122]

Anyone reading *The Ruin* cannot help but be struck by the similarly ruinous—and wondrous—state of the text itself due to the damage sustained towards the end of the Exeter Book, especially in lines 12–17 and 42–9.[123] Although some recent critics have emphasised the ostensibly celebratory nature of the poem’s presentation of transience, John Niles is more cautious, stressing the importance of the Christian theological implications of the theme of transience across numerous other poems in the Exeter Book, in which transience is ‘a likely source of grief and regret’.[124] Nonetheless, the poem is not entirely a lament about the past and present state of decay, but a recognition, and even a celebration—if only fleetingly—of what once was, albeit now only partially evoked because of the poem’s fragmentary state: something ‘shone’ (*scan*, 15a), and was an *orþonc*, ‘monument of skill’, and *ærsceaft*, ‘ancient work’ (16), achievements acknowledged in the praise for the mastermind behind these monuments (18–19). There is also a brief moment of upbeat reflection, an evident celebration of an imagined scene from years gone by, albeit one curtailed by *wyrd* (cf. *Ruin* 1b):

> Beorht wæron burgræced,   burnsele monige,
> heah horngestreon,   heresweg micel,
> meodoheall monig   *mon*dreama full,[125]
> oþþæt þæt onwende   wyrd seo swiþe.
>
> [Bright were the city-dwellings, many bath-halls,
> many a high gable, great battle-sound,
> many a mead-hall full of the revelry of people,
> until fate the mighty changed that.] (*Ruin* 21–4)

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[122] Cf. *Beo* 771–5a, in which it is *wundor micel*, ‘a great wonder’ (771a), that Heorot withstands the fight between Beowulf and Grendel.
[123] On this damage, see *ASPR*, ed. by Krapp and Dobbie, III, pp. xiv–xv; *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, pp. 12–13; and *Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, I, pp. 13–15.
[124] Niles, *God’s Exiles*, pp. 201–3, at 201, in response to Dailey, p. 185; Kathleen Davis, ‘Old English Lyrics: A Poetics of Experience’, in *The Cambridge History of Early Medieval English Literature*, ed. by Clare A. Lees (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 355–6; and Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, pp. 44–5.
[125] Note that the MS has ‘.ᛗ.dreama’.

Although the *burnsele monige*, 'many bath-halls' (21b), lend this description its special character (namely, that it describes a Roman city), echoes of *Beowulf* 67b–85 are palpable, as Leslie has suggested.[126] In *Beowulf*, it came to Hrothgar's mind that he wanted to order the construction of a hall (*Him on mod bearn / þæt healreced…*, 59b–60a, etc.), just as *The Ruin* describes how *Mod mo*[*nade m*]*yneswiftne gebrægd*, 'A mind instigated a purpose-swift plan' (18), to build the foundations of *burgræced*, 'city-dwellings' (21a).[127] Where Hrothgar purposes to build *medoærn micel*, 'a great mead-hall' (61a), *The Ruin* describes *meodoheall monig*, 'many a mead-hall' (23a);[128] and where in *Beowulf* Heorot is *heah ond horngeap*, 'high and horn-gabled' (82a), the city of *The Ruin* has *heah horngestreon*, 'many a high gable' (22a). Finally, even the twist of *wyrd seo swiþe*, 'fate the mighty' (24b), at the end of this section of *The Ruin*, punctuated abruptly by *oþþæt*, 'until' (24a), mirrors the doomed fate of Heorot alluded to in lines 82b–4a of *Beowulf*, which also employ a temporal conjunction: *þa gen þæt*, 'thereafter that' (83b–4a).[129] In a poem so indebted to formulaic phrasing, it is unsurprising to find such a parallel with the construction, and demise, of Heorot as described in *Beowulf* (though I make no judgement about the possibility of direct textual influence).[130]

This common stock of images is not restricted to lines 21–4 of *The Ruin*, however: like the gilded adornments of some of Heorot's inhabitants (especially Wealhtheow and Freawaru), the ruined city was home to many a man, who, *glædmod ond goldbeorht, gleoma gefrætwed, / wlonc ond wingal, wighyrstum scan*, 'joyous and gold-bright, adorned with splendour, proud and wine-wanton, shone with war-trappings' (33–4). Such an inhabitant, moreover, *seah on*

[126] *Three Old English Elegies*, ed. by Leslie, p. 29.
[127] This is the reading given in *Three Old English Elegies*, ed. by Leslie, p. 51, and Orchard, 'Reconstructing *The Ruin*', p. 66.
[128] Renoir, 'The Old English Ruin', p. 158.
[129] On the use of *oþþæt* here and elsewhere in OE poetry, see Orchard, 'Reconstructing *The Ruin*', p. 50, n. 21 (and references there). For a classic treatment of *wyrd*, see Benno J. Timmer, 'Wyrd in Anglo-Saxon Prose and Poetry', *Neophilologus*, 26 (1941), 24–33, 213–28; and, more recently, see Karma Lochrie, '*Wyrd* and the Limits of Human Understanding: A Thematic Sequence in the Exeter Book', *JEGP*, 85 (1986), 323–31.
[130] One might also note the more distant echoes in *Ruin* 11b (*steap geap gedreas*) with *Beo* 926b (*steapne hrof*) and 836b (*geapne hrof*).

sinc, on sylfor, on searogimmas, / on ead, on æht, on eorcanstan, / on þæs beorhtan burg, 'gazed on treasure, on silver, on precious gems, on wealth, on property, on precious stone, on this bright city' (35–7a). From the scenes of desolation before him, the poem's speaker conjures up an image of opulence which brought joy to the people who benefited from it—the only thing missing from this Roman scene, which would have been central to life in the Germanic hall, is any reference to a lord dispensing this treasure to his retainers.[131] Nonetheless, the references to the *beorht* […] *burgræced* (21a) and *beorhtan burg* (37a) are reminiscent of the references in *Beowulf* to Heorot as *beorhte bold*, 'a bright dwelling' (*Beo* 997a), and *beahsele beorhta*, 'the bright ring-hall' (1177a). The communal aspects of life in the hall are envisioned as having also taken place within the walls of the fallen buildings of *The Ruin*. This effect is heightened by the aural qualities of the sound and revelry described: there was *heresweg micel*, 'great battle-sound', or perhaps 'great song of an army' (*Ruin* 22b), and *meodoheall monig mondreama full*, 'many a mead-hall full of the revelry of people' (23b), and the revellers were *wingal*, 'wine-wanton' (34a).[132] As Leslie comments, 'the colours of [the poet's] imagination are entirely Germanic' at this stage in the poem, and the conventional images of the hall and of community are put to effective use in presenting scenes of conviviality, such that the second half of the poem is rather more uplifting than the first.[133] This imagery is poignant, though, precisely because the poet reflects on the distant past as something which has been lost, and on the transience, therefore, of all earthly things. As Niles remarks, like other poems in the Exeter Book, *The Ruin* has 'its thematic basis in the orthodox Christian belief that the only source of lasting joy is to be found in the afterlife'.[134] Accordingly, for all the celebratory presentation

[131] It is not impossible, of course, that just such a reference has been lost in the poem's damaged lines.
[132] Cf. respectively, *hearpan sweg*, 'the music of the lyre' (*Beo* 89b); *dream* […] */ hludne in healle*, 'loud mirth in the hall' (88b–9a); and *winærn* (654a), *winreced* (714b, 993b), and *winsele* (695a, 771b, 2456a), all of which mean 'wine-hall'.
[133] *Three Old English Elegies*, ed. by Leslie, p. 29.
[134] Niles, *God's Exiles*, p. 202.

of the ruin and its long-departed inhabitants, the poem fundamentally undermines any notion of an abiding earthly place, just as the ruin itself is 'undermined by age'.

Conclusion

This discussion has shown that the single most important conception of human notions of place in Old English poetry is that of the hall. Had the *Beowulf*-manuscript not been saved from the Ashburnham House fire in 1731, it would have met with the same fate as Heorot, and our understanding of this kind of place in Old English literature would have been much the poorer. Magennis has stressed how important the hall is for the type of society most often described in Old English poetry, and certainly in *Beowulf*—indeed, he terms it 'hall society'.[135] The hall is the chief locus of human interaction and is constitutive of human social practice: the hall is meaningless if it is not inhabited, and it is for precisely this reason that Grendel's occupation of Heorot is so disturbing. And although we are able to infer from various sources, including *Widsith*, that, despite the burning of Heorot, the Danes ultimately win the day against the Heathobards, for a lord and his *comitatus* to be without a hall renders this a somewhat pyrrhic victory. In contrast, the former inhabitants of the fallen city in *The Ruin* are not deprived of their dwelling place: it is deprived of them. Nevertheless, the scene of ruination before the eyes of the poem's anonymous speaker unsettles any suggestion of the permanence of place. As Magennis astutely observes, 'Ideas of community are reflected in the images of warmth and security of society found throughout Old English poetry *and* in antithetical images of dislocation and alienation'.[136] If *The Ruin* offers an example of ideas of both community and

[135] Magennis, *Images of Community*, p. 38.
[136] Magennis, *Images of Community*, p. 3 (emphasis added).

‘dislocation’, then the next chapter shall present similar notions of community through the lens of ‘alienation’ and exile, as presented in the so-called ‘elegies’.

Chapter Two
Contemplating Place in the Elegies

> Eadig bið se þe in his eþle geþihð,
> earm se him frynd geswicað
> ‘Blessed is the one who thrives in his homeland,
> wretched the one whom friends fail’
> —*Maxims I* 37

> Earm biþ se þe sceal ana lifgan, …
> wineleas wunian hafaþ him wyrd geteod
> ‘Wretched is the one who has to live alone, …
> *wyrd* has ordained that he is to dwell friendless’
> —*Maxims I* 171–2

Where the last chapter discussed the representation of the hall, the central human place in Old English poetry, this chapter examines those texts which look back, at times nostalgically, to the hall as a place which, like the society that it contains, has been lost or left behind. The loss of the hall and human society can serve in such instances as a metaphor for the transience of life itself, as seen in the account of King Edwin’s counsellor in Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica* II.xii (discussed in Chapter 1). The poems analysed here, moreover, range beyond the hall to the spaces and places antithetical to human social space, as experienced by the exiles who inhabit them. Indeed, in the Old English poetic tradition, exile is one of the principal ways in which humans encounter the world beyond the confines of the hall and human settlement. Estranged from human social space, these solitary figures either wander the vast spaces of the sea or are confined to remote places. As *Maxims I* 37 pointedly makes clear, one thrives in one’s *eþel*, ‘homeland’, amongst friends and kinsmen, but is *earm*, ‘wretched’, without them; both of these words, or at least the concepts which they denote, recur throughout the poems discussed in this chapter. Just as *The Ruin* shows place and human society ultimately to be transient, so too do the poems analysed here demonstrate that even over the course of a single

human lifetime, an individual's life in the hall can be fleeting. The experience of exile is also gendered: the male exiles discussed below, whilst separated from kith and kin, at least have the relative freedom to roam through space, whilst a woman's experience of exile is restricted to the one place, deprived of the sense of belonging to the community in which she might otherwise thrive. Nonetheless, whatever the specific experience of a particular exile figure, their existence is, for a time at least, universally wretched; whoever constituted the audience(s) of these poems—whether aristocratic or monastic, or both—all would have appreciated keenly the importance of community and the misery, therefore, of exile.

The poems treated in this discussion have, for the past century, conventionally been labelled 'elegies', a group of poems found exclusively in the Exeter Book, which typically includes *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, *The Riming Poem*, *Deor*, *Wulf and Eadwacer*, *The Wife's Lament*, *Resignation* (sometimes divided into *A* and *B*, also known as *The Penitent's Prayer*), *The Husband's Message* (sometimes grouped with *Riddle* 60), and *The Ruin*.[1] Whether or not these poems constitute a coherent group has been the source of much critical discussion, though I only provide a summary overview here.[2] In an early study dedicated to this question, Benno J. Timmer concluded that the only true elegies, in any classical sense of the term, are *Wulf and Eadwacer* and *The Wife's Lament*, the so-called *Frauenlieder*, whilst for the remaining poems in the group one might speak of an 'elegiac mood' turned to the purposes of 'religious propaganda'.[3] Although more generous in his assessment, Stanley B.

[1] The first study to put forward this grouping was Gustav Ehrismann, 'Religionsgeschichtliche Beiträge zum germanischen Frühchristentum', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, 35 (1909), 209–39; the first edition of this group of poems as 'the elegies' was *Die altenglische Elegie*, ed. by Ernst Sieper ([Strasbourg]: Verlag von Karl J. Trübner, 1915). On the critical establishment of this group of nine elegies, see Andy Orchard, 'Not What It Was: The World of Old English Elegy', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Elegy*, ed. by Karen Weisman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 104–8. It is important to note that, as with all Old English poems, these titles are the creations of modern editors.

[2] A concise account of this debate is available in O*ld English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck , pp. 11–12. For a historiographical account of the nineteenth-century origins of the discourse on Old English 'elegies', see María José Mora, 'The Invention of the Old English Elegy', *ES*, 76 (1995), 129–39.

[3] Timmer, 'The Elegiac Mood', p. 41; cf. Greenfield, 'The Old English Elegies', p. 168. More recently, Christine Fell, 'Perceptions of Transience', pp. 180–1, also expressed her scepticism about the utility of the term. For the term *Frauenlieder*, see Kemp Malone, 'Two English *Frauenlieder*', in *Studies in Old English*

Greenfield suggested that much Old English poetry is only 'imbued with an elegiac spirit', and that the so-called elegies 'resist […] final classification'.[4] Nonetheless, he put forward a capacious, and widely accepted, definition of the old English elegy: 'a relatively short reflective or dramatic poem embodying a contrasting pattern of loss and consolation, ostensibly based upon a specific personal experience or observation, and expressing an attitude towards that experience'.[5] Anne L. Klinck has more recently proposed that these poems have 'elegiac form' and can thus be grouped together as elegies.[6] However, she also notes that the term 'elegy' is 'inevitably somewhat arbitrary', and the genre to which it refers, at least in Old English literature, 'a slippery one, and hard to pin down'.[7] Notably, these poems have a shared manuscript context; however, that they are scattered throughout the second half of the Exeter Book demonstrates, in Klinck's view, 'that the compiler did not regard them as a distinct group' (unlike the two clusters of *Riddles*), and thus that '[t]he manuscript distinguishes no elegiac genre as such'.[8] Most recently, Orchard has remarked that an '"elegiac instinct" was pervasive in Anglo-Saxon literature', in both Latin and vernacular texts.[9] Whether there was an elegiac 'mood', 'spirit', 'form', or 'instinct', that the tone or mode of these poems is somehow elegiac is widely accepted.

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*Literature in Honor of Arthur G. Brodeu*r, ed. by Stanley B. Greenfield (Eugene: University of Oregon Press, 1963), pp. 106–17.

[4] Greenfield, 'The Old English Elegies', pp. 142, 172.

[5] Greenfield, 'The Old English Elegies', p. 143; cf. *The Wanderer*, ed. by Thomas P. Dunning and Alan J. Bliss (London: Methuen, 1969), p. 102; *The Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, p. 11; and Niles, *God's Exiles*, p. 94, n. 62.

[6] Anne L. Klinck, 'The Old English Elegy as a Genre', *English Studies in Canada*, 10 (1984), 129–40 (pp. 129–30).

[7] *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, p. 11; on questions of genre, see also pp. 223–6; and 'The Old English Elegy as a Genre'.

[8] *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, pp. 25, 30. However, whilst he shares this view, Orchard, 'Not What It Was', pp. 107–8, also notes that the more riddle-like elegies *Deor* and *Wulf and Eadwacer* occur consecutively, as do *The Husband's Message*, *Riddle* 60 (which he considers to be part of *The Husband's Message*), and *The Ruin*, interspersed amongst the two main clusters of *Riddles* themselves.

[9] Orchard, 'Not What It Was', p. 101. On these poem's Latin analogues and influences, see *Sources and Analogues*, trans. by Calder and Allen, pp. 133–53; *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, pp. 231–8; Orchard, 'Not What It Was', pp. 102–5, and 'Re-Reading *The Wanderer*: the Value of Cross-References', in *Via Crucis: The Way of the Cross, a Festschrift for James E. Cross*, ed. by Thomas N. Hall (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2002), pp. 1–26. Note the example of Alcuin's *De rerum humanarum vicissitudine et clade Lindisfarnensis monasterii* mentioned in Chapter 1.

If Greenfield's definition of the Old English elegy is rather generalising, Klinck singles out the defining characteristic of the so-called elegies: they are 'meditation[s] upon absence, loss, or transience', whose 'essential element […] is the sense of separation: a distance in time *or space* between someone and their desire'.[10] Central to this sense of separation in the majority of the elegies—particularly in spatial terms—is the notion of exile.[11] The speaker in *The Wanderer* is, famously, *anhaga*, 'a lone-dweller', who must *wadan wræclastas*, 'wander the exile-paths' (*Wan* 1a, 5a); likewise in *The Seafarer*, the poem's speaker *wunade wræccan lastum*, 'occupied the paths of exile' (*Sea* 15), and his soul is described as *anfloga*, 'a lone-flyer' (62b). And in both *The Riming Poem* and *Resignation*, the speakers give voice to similar notions of spatial separation, specifically from their homelands, an anxiety of separation epitomised in *Maxims I* 37, cited at the head of this chapter. The exile in *Resignation* is, like the Wanderer, an *anhoga*, who is *afysed* […] */ earm of minum eþle*, 'driven with haste, wretched, from my homeland' (*Res* 88b–9a).[12] Similarly in *The Riming Poem*, the poem's speaker laments that a metaphorical nightfall *me eðles ofonn*, 'will deprive me of my homeland'

[10] *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, pp. 224–5 (emphasis added); cf. Greenfield, 'The Old English Elegies', pp. 143–4; Niles, *God's Exiles*, pp. 116–17.
[11] For general discussion, see Stanley B. Greenfield, 'The Formulaic Expression of the Theme of "Exile" in Anglo-Saxon Poetry', *Speculum*, 30 (1955), 200–6; *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, pp. 225–6; Niles, *God's Exiles*, pp. 7–10; and Orchard, 'Not What It Was', p. 101. Concerning exile in *The Wanderer*, see, e.g., Robert E. Bjork, '*Sundor æt rune*: The Voluntary Exile of the Wanderer', *Neophilologus*, 73 (1989), 119–29; Patrick Cook, '*Woriað þa winsalo*: The Bonds of Exile in *The Wanderer*', *Neophilologus*, 80 (1996), 127–37; and Anthony Low, 'Exile, *The Wanderer*, and the Long Wave of Alienation and Subjectivity', in *Satura: Studies in Medieval Literature in Honour of Robert R. Raymo*, ed. by Nancy M. Reale and Ruth E. Sternglantz (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2001), pp. 1–19. And on gendered aspects of exile in the elegies (discussed further below), see Helen T. Bennett, 'Exile and Semiosis of Gender in Old English Elegies', in *Class and Gender in Early English Literature*, ed. by Britton J. Harwood and Gillian R. Overing (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 43–58; Marilynn Desmond, 'The Voice of Exile: Feminist Literary History and the Anonymous Anglo-Saxon Elegy', *Critical Inquiry*, 16 (1990), 572–90; and Stacy S. Klein, 'Gender and the Nature of Exile in Old English Elegies', *A Place to Believe in: Locating Medieval Landscapes*, ed. by Clare A. Lees and Gillian R. Overing (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006) pp. 113–31.
[12] Alan Bliss and Allen J. Frantzen, 'The Integrity of *Resignation*', *RES*, n.s. 27 (1976), 385–402, argue that *Resignation* as it survives in the Exeter Book is in fact two poems (*A* and *B*) with a folio missing after l. 69 as the poem has typically been edited; cf. *Resignation*, ed. by Lars Malmberg (Durham: Durham and St Andrews Medieval Texts, 1979). However, whilst Anne L. Klinck, '*Resignation*: Exile's Lament or Penitent's Prayer?', *Neophilologus*, 71 (1987), 423–30, and Marie Nelson, 'On Resignation', in *The Old English Elegies: New Essays in Criticism and Research*, ed. by Martin Green (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983), pp. 133–47, accept that a folio has probably been lost at this part of the MS, they argue in support of the poem's integrity (which they see as being divided into two main parts). Since the question of the poem's integrity, or otherwise, is of secondary importance here, though, I refer simply to *Resignation*.

(*Rim* 74a). Where the speakers in each of these poems find themselves wandering the exile-paths *away* from their homelands, in the so-called *Frauenlieder*, the identifiably female speakers of these poems are exiled *to* a specific locale.[13] In *Wulf and Eadwacer*, Wulf is on an island, *ic on oþerre*, 'I on another' (*Wulf* 4b)—presumably the speaker here is, for the large part, alone—whilst in *The Wife's Lament*, the Wife verbalises her exile all the more explicitly, calling herself *wineleas wrecca*, 'a friendless exile', who has been sent to live *on wudabearwe*, 'in a wood-grove' (*Wif* 10a, 27a), a topographical feature also associated with the topography in which Grendel and his mother have their isolated dwelling in *Beowulf* (discussed at length in Chapter 4). However, although the addressee of the inscribed message in *The Husband's Message* is separated from her husband or lover, it is he who has been driven away by a feud, not her. And whilst Deor comments on his own loss of social position with reference to the sorrows of various figures in Germanic tradition, only Welund (in other Old English poems, Weland) *wræces cunnade*, 'experienced exile' (*Deor* 1b). Finally, *The Ruin*, though concerned with a particular place, expresses separation not in space, but in time, and it certainly does not treat the theme of exile. Accordingly, it is possible to subdivide these elegiac poems, as Klinck does, into two main groups: the more 'homiletic' poems as she calls them (*The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, *The Riming Poem*, and *Resignation*) and the 'love poems' (*Wulf and Eadwacer*, *The Wife's Lament*, and *The Husband's Message*), and *Deor* and *The Ruin*, both independent of these sub-groups.[14] Indeed, some critics have expressed reservations about grouping *The Ruin* alongside the other elegies at all: despite many similarities of theme and imagery with the other elegiac poems, the difference of tone in *The Ruin* and the lack of an ethopoeic speaker relating

[13] On the grammatical marking of gender in these texts, see Anne L. Klinck, 'Poetic Markers of Gender in Medieval "Woman's Song": Was Anonymous a Woman?', *Neophilologus*, 87 (2003), 339–59.
[14] Klinck, 'The Old English Elegy as a Genre', p. 129; cf. Hugh Magennis, 'The Solitary Journey: Aloneness and Community in *The Seafarer*', in *Text, Image, Interpretation: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature and its Insular Context in Honour of Éamonn Ó Carragáin*, ed. by A.J. Minnis and Jane Roberts, Studies in the Early Middle Ages, 18 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), p. 304.

something about his or her own experience clearly set it apart from the others in the group.[15] Similarly, *Wulf and Eadwacer*, *The Husband's Message* and *Deor*, which are not concerned with exile *per se*, are largely excluded from the analyses put forward here. Klinck's useful categorisation of the exile poems into those which are more 'homiletic' on the one hand and those concerned with questions of love on the other is also borne out by the different ways in which these two groups of poems engage with space and place.

Accordingly, the first part of this chapter presents an analysis of the ways in which the Wanderer's and the Seafarer's experiences of exile are cast in spatial terms, especially through the sea imagery prevalent in both poems, and the depiction of past times spent in human company in the hall; pertinent passages from two other 'elegies', *The Riming Poem* and *Resignation*, are also considered since they too allude to the spatial experience of exile. In the second part of this discussion, the rather more isolated, and intimate, experience of exile endured by the female speaker of *The Wife's Lament* is examined in terms of her localisation in a particular place, removed from human society. What becomes apparent in such a reading of this group of texts is that the functions of space and place in these poems variously corroborate and contradict the notions of place encountered in Chapter 1.

Loss and Displacement in the Elegies

Although they are poems with a long critical history, *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* have seldom been studied explicitly with a view to the role of space and place in the exile of each poem's speaker.[16] In terms of their structures, both of these poems, in their surviving forms,

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[15] See, e.g., Lee, '*The Ruin*: Bath or Babylon?', esp. pp. 453–4; Renoir, 'The Old English Ruin', p. 153; and Timmer, 'The Elegiac Mood', p. 34.

[16] Various views concerning whether there is one or more than one speaker/narrator in *The Wanderer* in particular are discussed in R.M. Lumiansky, 'The Dramatic Structure of the Old English *Wanderer*', *Neophilologus*, 34 (1950), 104–12; John C. Pope, 'Dramatic Voices in *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*', in *Franciplegus: Medieval and Linguistic Studies in Honor of Francis Peabody Magoun Jr*, ed. by Jess B.

appear to be monologues—probably with a narratorial frame in *The Wanderer*—which fall broadly into two distinct halves: in each case, the first (*Wan* 1–57 and *Sea* 1–66a) is an account of the speaker's 'personal experience', and the second largely a reflection on 'the transience of earthly power and prosperity' (*Wan* 58–115 and *Sea* 66b–124).[17] Several critics have noted, however, that a key difference in the exiles of the Wanderer and the Seafarer is that the former's exile is forced upon him by circumstance whilst the latter's, it becomes apparent, is voluntary.[18] This fact has determined how critics have understood each poem: *The Wanderer* as a *consolatio*, and specifically a Boethian *consolatio*, whilst both have been read as religious meditations, examples of wisdom poetry, and *plancti*.[19] *The Seafarer*, though, has widely been understood—since Dorothy Whitelock's influential reading of the poem—in terms of its apparent indebtedness to the principally Irish trope of the *peregrinatio pro amore Dei*.[20]

Bessinger and Robert P. Creed (New York: New York University Press, 1965), pp. 164–93; Gerald Richman, 'Speaker and Speech Boundaries in *The Wanderer*', *JEGP*, 81 (1982), 469–79; Eric G. Stanley, 'Old English Poetic Diction and the Interpretation of *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, and *The Penitent's Prayer*', *Anglia*, 73 (1956), 413–66 (pp. 447–50); and Melissa J. Wolfe, '*Swa cwæð snottor on mode*: Four Issues in *The Wanderer*', *Neophilologus*, 92 (2008), 259–65.

[17] *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, p. 31; cf. *The Wanderer*, ed. by Dunning and Bliss, pp. 79–82; and *Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, I, pp. 215–19, and II, pp. 503–4. More detailed discussion of the poems' structures can be found in *The Wanderer*, ed. by Dunning and Bliss, pp. 78–94; *The Seafarer*, ed. by I.L. Gordon (London: Methuen, 1960), pp. 1–12; Stanley B. Greenfield, '*The Wanderer*: A Reconsideration of Theme and Structure', *JEGP*, 50 (1951), 451–65; A.D. Horgan, 'The Structure of *The Seafarer*', *RES*, n.s. 30 (1979), 41–9; D.R. Howlett, 'The Structures of *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*', *SN*, 47 (1975), 313–17; Bernard F. Huppé, '*The Wanderer*: Theme and Structure', *JEGP*, 42 (1943), 516–38; Roy F. Leslie, 'The Meaning and Structure of *The Seafarer*', in *The Old English Elegies*, ed. by Green, pp. 96–122, and *The Wanderer*, ed. by Roy F. Leslie (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1966), pp. 1–25; and Peter Orton, 'The Form and Structure of *The Seafarer*', *SN*, 63 (1991), 37–55. However, for a nuanced discussion of the purportedly bipartite structure of *The Seafarer*, including whether lines 117–24 constitute the ending of another poem altogether, see *Eight Old English Poems*, ed. by John C. Pope, rev. by R.D. Fulk, 3rd edn (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), pp. 99–102.

[18] Bjork, '*Sundor æt rune*', pp. 119–29; *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, p. 33; Lee, *The Guest-hall of Eden*, pp. 139, 144; Tom A. Shippey, *Old English Verse* (London: Hutchinson, 1972), p. 71; and Stanley, 'Old English Poetic Diction', p. 463.

[19] James E. Cross, 'On the Genre of *The Wanderer*', *Neophilologus*, 45 (1961), 63–75; A.D. Horgan, '*The Wanderer*: A Boethian Poem?', *RES*, n.s. 38 (1987), 40–6; John L. Selzer, '*The Wanderer* and the Meditative Tradition', *SP*, 80 (1983), 227–37; John C. Shields, '*The Seafarer* as a *Meditatio*', *Studia Mystica*, 3 (1980), 29–41; Carolyne Larrington, *A Store of Common Sense: Gnomic Theme and Style in Old Icelandic and Old English Wisdom Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 188–97, and Thomas A. Shippey, '*The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* as Wisdom Poetry', in *Companion to Old English Poetry*, ed. by Henk Aertsen and Rolf H. Bremmer (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1994), pp. 145–58; and Rosemary Woolf, '*The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, and the Genre of *Planctus*', in *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Essays in Appreciation for John C. McGalliard*, ed. by Lewis E. Nicholson and Dolores Warwick Frese (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), pp. 192–207.

[20] Dorothy Whitelock, 'The Interpretation of *The Seafarer*', in *The Early Cultures of North-West Europe (H. M. Chadwick Memorial Studies)*, ed. by Cyril Fox and Bruce Dickins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), pp. 261–72; but, for a useful contribution which challenges Whitelock's now long-established theory, see

However these poems are ultimately to be understood, if indeed a definitive judgement concerning their genre can ever be made, the following discussion looks at how the exile of each poem's speaker is construed in spatial terms, namely through the speakers' displacement.

In the first half of *The Wanderer*, the poem's speaker describes his personal experience of loss, reflecting on his former life in the hall before the death of his lord (22–3a) and before he became *eðle bedæled / freomægum feor*, 'deprived of his homeland, far from noble kinsmen' (20b–1a). The speaker in *Resignation* is likewise deprived of his homeland, not because of the death of his lord, however, but because he has committed *gewyrhto… micle fore monnum*, 'great transgressions before people' (*Res* 80b–1a): *forþon ic afysed eom / earm of minum eþle*, 'therefore I, wretched, am driven with haste from my homeland' (*Res* 88b–9a).[21] Where the speaker in *Resignation* expresses regret at having been expelled from human society, the Wanderer laments the involuntary loss of human company and place: he refers to his deceased lord as *goldwine minne*, 'my gold-friend' (*Wan* 22b),[22] lamenting how he then *sohte seledreorig sinces bryttan*, 'sought, bereft of the hall, a bestower of treasure' (25), so that someone *in medohealle*, 'in the mead-hall' (27a), might understand him and his present feelings. This longing for life in the hall is reprised only a few lines later, in which the ethopoeic *ic* is replaced with a seemingly generalising *he*: *Gemon he selesecgas ond sincþege, / hu hine on geoguðe his goldwine / wenede to wiste. Wyn eal gedreas*, 'He recalls hall-retainers and treasure-receiving, how, in his youth, his gold-friend accustomed him to feasting. All joy has perished' (34–6).[23] The loss of company, feasting, and treasure-giving in the hall is equated

Sebastian I. Sobecki, 'The Interpretation of *The Seafarer*: A Re-examination of the Pilgrimage Theory', *Neophilologus*, 92 (2008), 127–39.

[21] On the meaning of *afysed* ('driven') here, see *Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, pp. 194–5.

[22] For a discussion of the grammatical number of *goldwine* in 22b and 35b (which is generally taken to be singular), see Bruce Mitchell, 'An Old English Syntactical Reverie: *The Wanderer*, Lines 22 and 34–36', *NM*, 68 (1967), 139–49.

[23] Carol Braun Pasternack, *The Textuality of Old English Poetry*, CSASE, 13 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 38–9. In *The Wanderer*, ed. by Dunning and Bliss, pp. 83, 86, n. 1, the editors refer to the ethopoeic speaker as 'the *persona* the poet has created', and note that this switch to the third person is 'characteristic' of OE poetry, such that here 'no generalization is intended'.

emphatically with the loss of *all* joy. And in a particularly Beowulfian echo, after fondly recalling in his sleep his affection for his lord (41–3), the Wanderer dreams, too, how he *in geardagum giefstolas breac*, 'enjoyed use of the gift-stool in former days' (44).[24] As was shown in Chapter 1, the hall is a metonym for the aristocratic society that inhabits it: place and belonging are two sides of the same coin. For the Wanderer to be displaced from his lord and community in the hall is to experience a profound social and spatial rupture, so it is not hyperbole when he bemoans the loss of all joy.

Like *The Wanderer*, the first half of *The Riming Poem* exploits the imagery of communal life in the hall in the ethopoeic speaker's reflections on his earlier situation. He remembers that *symbel ne alegon*, 'feasts did not fail' (*Rim* 5b), just as *ne wæs me in healle gad*, 'there was no lack for me in the hall' (15b), and he recalls how *Oft þær rinc gebad, / þæt he in sele sæge sincgewæge*, 'Often a warrior waited there, so that he might see the weight of treasure in the hall' (16b–18a). It is then revealed that the poem's speaker was himself a lord, whose *hygedryht befeold*, 'band of retainers surrounded [him]' (21b), and who *staþolæhtum steold*, 'possessed the landed estate' (22a), and *ahte* […] *ealdorstol*, 'possessed the ancestral seat' (23b; cf. *Wan* 44b above). There is extended description of the resounding music of the harp (25b–29), echoing the envelope pattern in *Beowulf* 767–70, discussed in Chapter 1: *hlude hlynede, hleoþor dynede*, 'loudly it sounded, song resounded' (28). The scenes depicted here—with feasting, music-making, a company of retainers, treasure, and a seat from which to dispense it—are a commonplace that has already been encountered in the presentation of communal life in *Beowulf*. As in Heorot, here there is general mirth and exultation (31–7), which is reflected in the stature of the hall itself, which seemingly reverberates with the sound of music (in contrast to Heorot's more ominous resounding in *Beowulf* 81b–2a and 1799b):

[24] On these lines, see Erick Kelemen, '*Clyppan* and *cyssan*: The Formulaic Expression of Return from Exile in Old English Literature', *English Language Notes*, 38 (2001), 1–19. Note that the form *giefstolas* is probably a late West Saxon genitive singular (following *brucan* + gen.); see *The Wanderer*, ed. by Dunning and Bliss, pp. 12, 112–13; and *The Wanderer*, ed. by Leslie, pp. 74–5.

Burgsele beofode, beorht hlifade, 'The stronghold shook, towered bright' (30). Hall and community are, once again, inextricable from one another; place here, to use Tuan's expression, 'is security'.[25] However, an abrupt *Nu*, 'Now' (43a), contrasts this conventional, if no less impressive, evocation of communal life in the hall with the trouble which has since befallen the poem's speaker, and marks the shift into the more homiletic second half of the poem.[26] The speaker muses on the transience of earthly life using a pair of verbs found elsewhere in the elegies: *Dreamas swa her gedreosað, dryhtscype gehreosað*, 'Joys thus decline here, lordship falls' (55).[27] Where the Wanderer bewails emphatically in the past tense that *Wyn eal gedreas*, the use of the same verb in the present tense in line 55 of *The Riming Poem* suggests that the lord utters his lament just as the declining of joy dawns on him. The decline of joy is underscored by the assonance in the on-verse's two stressed syllables: ***Drea****mas swa her ge****dreo****sað*. Ultimately, though, the hall and the community within it are subservient to the poet's rhetoric of impermanence and loss.

The motif of loss is developed to the fullest in the second half of *The Wanderer*, in which the Wanderer's wistful reflections on his own change in fortune lead him to contemplate the transience of all earthly things—'the theme of the poem'[28]—as encapsulated in the following much quoted lines:[29]

> Her bið feoh læne, her bið freond læne,
> her bið mon læne, her bið mæg læne,
> eal þis eorþan gesteal idel weorþeð.

[25] Tuan, p. 3.
[26] Davis, 'Old English Lyrics', p. 336; *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, pp. 40–1; *The Old English Riming Poem*, ed. by O.D. Macrae-Gibson (Cambridge: Brewer, 1983), pp. 7–9, 46; and Orchard, 'Not What It Was', p. 105.
[27] Cf. *Wan* 36b, 48a, 63b, 102a; *Sea* 86a; and *Ruin* 3a, 5b, 11b.
[28] Stanley, 'Old English Poetic Diction', pp. 465–6.
[29] Cf. the ON *Hávamál* stanzas 76–77: *Deyr fé, deyja frœndr, deyr siálfr it sama*, 'Cattle die, kinsmen die, the self also dies', in *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius*, ed. by Gustav Neckel, rev. by Hans Kuhn, 4th edn (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1962), p. 29; translation my own.

[Here wealth is fleeting, here friend[s are] fleeting,
here man is fleeting, here kin [are] fleeting,
all the foundation of the earth will become empty.] (*Wan* 108–10)

These memorable lines drive home the fact that people, possessions, and places alike are transitory. And so, from the lost joys of human company in the hall recalled in the first half of the poem, the Wanderer's attention shifts to crumbling, weather-battered walls in the second,[30] presumably including those of the hall of the Wanderer's former lord:

swa nu missenlice geond þisne middangeard
winde biwaune **weallas** stondaþ,
hrime bihrorene, hryðge þa ederas.
Wo[**n**]**iað** þa **win**salo, **waldend** licgað
dreame bidrorene, duguþ eal **gecrong**
wlonc bi **wealle**.

[so now variously throughout this middle-earth,
walls stand, battered by wind,
covered with frost, the precincts exposed to storms.
The wine-halls diminish, rulers lie
bereft of joy, the *comitatus* has fallen
proud by the wall.] (*Wan* 75–80a)

As was noted in the previous chapter, this passage has much in common with *The Ruin*, especially its opening six lines with the shattered wall-stone, fallen town-steads, collapsed roofs, ruined towers, and riven gate. Not only is this imagery familiar, though, but *The Ruin* and *The Wanderer* share much of their vocabulary, too (words and half-lines in common are highlighted in bold above).[31] As Orchard has noted, this passage, like the rest of *The Wanderer*, is full of double alliteration, and in these and the surrounding lines (73–84) there is interlinear alliteration on *w-* in four lines.[32] The sonority of this passage is augmented further by the

[30] Greenfield, 'The Old English Elegies', p. 150.
[31] *Three Old English Elegies*, ed. by Leslie, p. 30; and Orchard, 'Reconstructing *The Ruin*', pp. 59–60, at 60, who comments that 'One might well argue that the poet of *The Wanderer* was familiar with *The Ruin*'; but cf. *Three Old English Elegies*, ed. by Leslie, p. 30.
[32] Orchard, 'Reconstructing *The Ruin*', p. 59. I count 74 lines (64.3%) containing double alliteration in the poem, noticeably higher than the average of 46% calculated by Hutcheson, *Old English Poetic Metre*, p. 271; cf.

internal rhyme on *hrime bihrorene* (77a) and *dreame bidrorene* (79a), as too in *The Ruin* 4–6 (*hrime on lime*, *gehrorene*, *gedrorene*, etc.).[33] With their walls *winde biwaune*, 'battered by wind' (76a), wine-halls either *woriað* (78a), the manuscript reading—literally 'wander', but here often understood figuratively as 'totter'—or *woniað*, 'wane' or, figuratively, 'crumble'.[34] The lords (*waldend*, 78b) of these halls and the fallen members of their *comitati* are said to have been *wlonc bi wealle*, 'proud by the wall' (80a).[35] The importance of the *comitatus*, or *dugup* here, is that it is, according to Thomas Dunning and Alan Bliss, 'the dominant image [...] of the poem'—so much so that '[e]very line of the poem combines with every other to evoke this setting'.[36] Indeed, in this passage the hall and human society are bound together by the repeated alliteration on *w-* and the use of internal rhyme, even as the hall crumbles and its inhabitants lie dead.[37] This is not a unique picture, however, but one which plays out time and again *geond þisne middangeard*, 'throughout this middle-earth' (75b), on the level of both 'the acutely personal [... and] the cosmically impersonal'.[38]

Nonetheless, the poem shifts back to the perspective of the Wanderer and the ruins of the hall before him: God, *ælda scyppend*, 'the creator of men' (85b), destroys *þisne eardgeard*, '*this* earth-dwelling' (85a), until eventually—echoing once more *The Ruin* (2b)—deprived of inhabitants, *eald enta geweorc idlu stodon*, 'the old works of giants stood empty' (87), a description which Carol Braun Pasternack calls 'a synecdoche for all material endeavours in

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84.6% in *The Ruin*, as discussed in Chapter 2. Compare this interlinear alliteration on *w-* with that found in *The Wife's Lament*, discussed below.

[33] Frankis, 'The Thematic Significance', pp. 256–7; Orchard, 'Reconstructing *The Ruin*', p. 59. On the use of paronomasia more generally in *The Wanderer*, see Eugene R. Kintgen, 'Wordplay in *The Wanderer*', *Neophilologus*, 59 (1975), 119–27.

[34] Cook, '*Woriað þa winsalo*', pp. 127–37, however, interprets the verb *woriað* literally. In *The Wanderer*, ed. by Leslie, pp. 63, 99, Leslie retains the MS reading, which he glosses more liberally still as 'to moulder', whilst in *The Wanderer*, ed. by Dunning and Bliss, pp. 118–19, the editors, whose emendation I accept here, dismiss any figurative sense of *woriað* here and emend to *woniað*.

[35] Cf. *Ruin* 34a; *Sea* 29a (*wlonc ond wingal*, 'proud and wine-wanton'); and *Vain* 14–15a (*wlonce wigsmiþas winburgum in / sittaþ at symle*, 'proud war-smiths [or 'idol-smiths'] in their wine-fortresses sit at the feast').

[36] *The Wanderer*, ed. by Dunning and Bliss, p. 94.

[37] Orchard, 'Re-Reading *The Wanderer*', pp. 3–4.

[38] S.L. Clark and Julian N. Wasserman, 'The Imagery of *The Wanderer*', *Neophilologus*, 63 (1979), 291–6 (p. 294).

this world'.[39] It is contemplation of *þisne eardgeard* and *þisne wealsteal*, '*this* wall-foundation' (88a),[40] moreover, which prompts the Wanderer to launch into the poem's famous *ubi sunt* speech, in which he laments the loss of the various *seledreamas*, 'hall-joys' (93b), of communal life in the hall:[41]

> Hwær cwom mearg? Hwær cwom mago?
> Hwær cwom maþþumgyfa?
> Hwær cwom symbla gesetu? Hwær sindon seledreamas?
> Eala beorht bune! Eala byrnwiga!
> Eala þeodnes þrym! Hu seo þrag gewat.
>
> [Where has the horse gone? Where has the warrior gone?
> Where has the treasure-giver gone?
> Where have the seats of feasts gone? Where are the hall-joys?
> Oh, the bright cup! Oh, the byrnied warrior!
> Oh, the lord's glory! How that time has departed.] (*Wan* 92–5)

Whilst the Wanderer bitterly recalls these past times, that such reflections are triggered by a ruined 'wall-foundation' show that this is also a lament for a lost place, specifically for the place where these social interactions occurred.[42] All that seems to remain of this remembered time and place is the 'wall-foundation'. It does not seem unreasonable to assume that the *weal wundrum heah, wyrmlicum fah*, 'wall wondrously high, decorated with serpentine patterns'

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[39] Pasternack, p. 44. For a discussion of the possibility that this line is a reference to the Flood, see John Burrow, '*The Wanderer*, Lines 73–87', *NQ*, 210 (1965), 166–8; and Frankis, 'The Thematic Significance', pp. 260–9; but cf. John Richardson, 'Two Notes on the Time Frame of *The Wanderer* (Lines 22 and 73–87)', *Neophilologus*, 73 (1989), 158–9, who rejects such a reading.
[40] Cf. *þes wealstan*, 'this wall-stone' (*Ruin* 1a). Despite the demonstrative pronoun here, Pasternack, pp. 46–7, notes that the *wealsteal* is another instance of 'synecdoche' (strictly speaking here, metonymy), this time for *þis deorce lif*, 'this dark life' (88a).
[41] *The Wanderer*, ed. by Dunning and Bliss, p. 90; Magennis, *Images of Community*, p. 95. Cf. *Hwær sint nu þæs wisan Welandes ban?*, 'Where now are the bones of that wise Weland?' (*Met* 10.33), and *Hwær cwom engla ðrym…?*, 'Where has the host of angels gone…?' (*Sat* 36b). On the *ubi sunt* motif, see James E. Cross, '*Ubi Sunt* Passages in Old English – Sources and Relationships', *Vetenskaps-Societeten i Lund Årsbok*, (1956), 23–44; and Orchard, 'Artful Alliteration', pp. 456–8. On the indebtedness of this motif to Isidore of Seville's *Synonyma*, see Claudia Di Sciacca, *Finding the Right Words: Isidore's* Synonyma *in Anglo-Saxon England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), pp. 138–43.
[42] On the passage of time in the elegies, and especially in *The Wanderer*, see Janet Bately, 'Time and the Passing of Time in *The Wanderer* and Related Old English Texts', *Essays and Studies*, n.s. 37 (1984), 1–15; Martin Green, 'Man, Time, and Apocalypse in *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, and *Beowulf*', *JEGP*, 74 (1975), 502–18; and John Dennis Grosskopf, 'Time and Eternity in the Anglo-Saxon Elegies', *Time and Eternity: The Medieval Discourse*, ed. by Gerhard Jaritz and Gerson Moreno-Riaño, International Medieval Research, 9 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), pp. 323–30.

(98), is part of the same set of ruins to which the *wealsteal* (88a) belongs.[43] This puzzling line has been variously interpreted as a Neolithic gravestone, as the decorated walls of the cave in which the Wanderer's lord is supposedly buried, as 'the channels and passages cut by engraver beetles and their larvae' into a wooden wall, as a 'variegated' Roman 'serpentine motif', as patterns 'produced by herring-bone masonry in Roman walls', and simply as 'some kind of decoration on a Roman structure'.[44] Whilst the parallels between *The Wanderer* and *The Ruin* would make a Roman association more tempting here, it is worth heeding Dunning and Bliss's note of caution: 'It is perhaps pointless to discuss whether the patterns were carved or painted; we have no means of knowing what was in the poet's mind, and no certainty that he wished to provide antiquarian exactitude.'[45] Whatever the precise referent of the vexing *wyrmlicum fah*—if, indeed, there ever was one—it is now lost to us, just as the hall and its inhabitants are lost to the Wanderer. Significantly, this rather mysterious half-line augments the effect of the 'wondrously high wall' that it describes, a commemorative symbol of departed times, like the bright cup and byrnied warrior in the immediately preceding *ubi sunt* passage, and like the *wrætlic* […] *wealstan*, 'wondrous wall-stone', in the opening line of *The Ruin*. Physical place and human social space are ultimately inseparable even after they have long since fallen into disuse or ceased to function.

This ruined place, then, is both quite literally and literarily a *topos*, one already encountered in *The Ruin*. Just as Heorot is metonymic of the human society housed in it, so too are ruins metonyms not just for the lives of their own former inhabitants, but for the passage of all earthly things. Indeed, like the *eald enta geweorc* which *idlu stodon*, 'stood empty' (87),

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[43] This translation of *wyrmlicum fah* follows *The Wanderer*, ed. by Dunning and Bliss, p. 74; cf. Orchard, 'Re-Reading *The Wanderer*', p. 3, n. 10.

[44] Robert O. Bowen, 'The Wanderer, 98', *Explicator*, 13 (1954), 58–61 (p. 58); Christopher Dean, '*Weal wundrum heah, wyrmlicum fah* and the Narrative Background of *The Wanderer*', *MP*, 63 (1965), 141–3 (p. 143); Walter Hoyt French, '*The Wanderer* 98: *wyrmlicum fah*', *MLN*, 67 (1952), 526–9 (p. 527); *The Wanderer*, ed. by Leslie, p. 86; Tony Millns, '*The Wanderer* 98: *weal wundrum heah wyrmlicum fah*', *RES*, n.s. 28 (1977), 431–8 (p. 434); and *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, p. 125.

[45] *The Wanderer*, ed. by Dunning and Bliss, p. 74.

the poem's concluding lines relate how *eal þis eorþan gesteal idel weorþeð*, 'all the foundation of the earth will become empty' (110)—microcosm reflects macrocosm. If *The Wanderer*, then, encapsulates best of all the elegies a sense for what has been lost or left behind, this type of loss is at least implicit or alluded to in the remaining poems to be discussed here. All of these poems, though, betray some interest in the spaces and places inhabited during each speaker's exile, and chief of these is the sea, where, Nicholas Howe notes, 'any sense of place must be fleeting and illusory if it can even be said to exist'.[46] The sense of loss attributed to each of the things listed in lines 92–5 of *The Wanderer* contrasts sharply with a similar passage in *The Seafarer* 44–6: *Ne biþ to him hearpan hyge ne to hringþege, / ne to wife wyn ne to worulde hyht, / ne ymbe owiht elles, nefne ymb yða gewealc*, 'His [the Seafarer's] thought is not for the harp nor for ring-receiving, nor for the joy of a woman nor for worldly bliss, nor about anything else except for the tossing of the waves'. Rather than having been deprived of the joys of life in the hall as in the case of the Wanderer, the Seafarer here actively rejects them and seeks instead the isolation of being at sea, which in turn will bring him closer to God and his community in Heaven: it is this that makes him a 'voluntary exile' from his worldly community and thus, metaphorically at least, a *peregrinus pro amore Dei*.[47] As Hugh Magennis has noted, ultimately in *The Seafarer* 'the only community that matters is not that of the earthly hall […], but is the heavenly community with its transcendent hall joys: *dream mid dugeþum* [*Sea* 80a].'[48] Likewise, Garner has observed that the poem's 'dynamism l[ies] partially in its negotiation of various spaces' such as the earthly hall and the heavenly community.[49] Though the Wanderer laments the loss of his earthly community, the same dynamism is evident in *The*

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[46] Howe, *Writing the Map*, p. 65.
[47] Whitelock, pp. 261–72, at 263; cf. Juliet Mullins, '*Herimum in Mari*: Anglo-Saxon Attitudes towards *Peregrinatio* and the Ideal of a Desert in the Sea', in *The Maritime World of the Anglo-Saxons*, ed. by Stacy S. Klein, William Schipper, and Shannon Lewis-Simpson (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2014), pp. 64–6. Although Whitelock interpreted the poem literally (i.e. as a literal representation of pilgrimage), Sobecki, pp. 135–8, puts forward the yet more literalist reading that the poem describes the experiences of a fisherman.
[48] Magennis, 'The Solitary Journey', p. 305.
[49] Garner, *Structuring Spaces*, p. 153.

Wanderer, the concluding line of which commends all those who seek mercy to God in Heaven, *þær us eal seo fæstnung stondeð*, 'where for us all stability stands' (115b).[50] The Seafarer stresses in spatial terms, moreover, the differences between people content *on foldan*, 'on the land' (13a), and himself, who *earmcearig iscealdne sæ / winter wunade wræccan lastum*, 'in winter, wretched and sorrowful, inhabited the ice-cold sea, the paths of exile' (14–15).[51] The contrast between life in the hall in lines 44–6 and the afflictions of wintry weather at sea in lines 14–16 mirrors the opposition between Bede's metaphorical hall *accenso* […] *foco in medio*, 'with the fire lit in the centre [of the room]', and the world outside, *furentibus* […] *turbinibus hiemalium pluuiarum uel niuium*, 'with the raging storms of winter rains or snow', quoted in Chapter 1. The only comfort in each case is eternal life in God's heavenly community. Indeed, although the Irish hagiographical tradition of the (*h*)*eremus in mari* ('desert in the sea') is not reflected in Anglo-Saxon saints' lives, that the Seafarer eschews *þis deade lif / læne on londe*, 'this dead life, transitory on land' (65b–6a), in favour of a more ascetic existence at sea certainly gestures towards the idea of the *heremus in mari*.[52] In the Anglo-Saxon tradition, the sea is nonetheless seen as a 'tumultuous force perpetually to be reckoned with',[53] and, following Augustine, writers such as Aldhelm, Alcuin and Ælfric viewed pilgrimage over the sea, at least, as a metaphor for the difficult journey from the earthly life to the heavenly, a metaphor identified in most readings of *The Seafarer*.[54] This contrasts with the presentation of

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[50] On the importance of the heavenly community in both of these poems, see Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, pp. 169–74.
[51] Holton, pp. 213–15; *The Seafarer*, ed. by Gordon, pp. 6–7; Mullins, p. 64; Marijane Osborn, 'Venturing upon Deep Waters in *The Seafarer*', *NM*, 79 (1978), 1–6 (p. 7).
[52] Cf. *Wan* 88a: *þis deorce lif*, 'this dark life'. For a discussion of the Anglo-Saxon hagiographical tradition, see Mullins, pp. 70–72; note that Mullins' spelling differs from the more typical form (*h*)*erem-*; *herimum* is presumably here the masc. acc. sg. In Felix's *Vita sancti Guthlaci* 24–5, for instance, the *heremus* which Guthlac seeks out is, notably, on an island in the fens, accessed via boat, but not out at sea, for which see Felix, *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, ed. by Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 86–9). For a summary of the critical treatment of Irish influence on Old English literature, see Charles D. Wright, *The Irish Tradition in Old English Literature*, CSASE, 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 7–11. On the possible Irish influence on *The Seafarer* in particular, see, e.g., Colin A. Ireland, 'Some Analogues of the O.E. *Seafarer* from Hiberno-Latin Sources', *NM*, 92 (1991), 1–14.
[53] Clemoes, *Interactions of Thought*, p. 134
[54] See, e.g., *The Seafarer*, ed. by Gordon, p. 4; *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, p. 37; Mullins, pp. 72–73; Niles, *God's Exiles*, p. 212; Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 95–8; Shippey, *Old English Verse*, p. 70; G.V.

the sea in *The Wanderer*, 'where it operates as a symbol of desolation', and not as a symbol of the Christian allegory of the journey from this world to the next.[55]

The Space of the Sea in The Wanderer *and* The Seafarer

In the case of the Wanderer, his involuntary exile takes him out onto the seas and, like the Seafarer, onto the 'exile paths': *geond lagulade longe sceolde / hreran mid hondum hrimcealde sæ, / wadan wræclastas*, 'over the water-way [he] long had to stir the frost-cold sea with [his] hands, travel the exile-paths' (*Wan* 3–5a). Similarly, the Wanderer *wod wintercearig ofer waþema gebind*, 'went, winter-sorrowful, over the waves' expanse' (24), a half-line repeated later in the poem when he sends *ofer waþema gebind werigne sefan*, '[his] weary heart over the waves' expanse' (57). Although some critics have taken *ofer waþema gebind*, a half-line unique to *The Wanderer*, to signify the binding of frozen waves, it seems rather more likely, as Leslie suggests, that it refers to the expanse (i.e. the great volume) of the waves, referring, in line 57, back to the *fealwe wegas*, 'fallow waves', of line 46b, and not to improbably frozen waves.[56] The vastness of the sea is also acknowledged in *The Seafarer*, where the heart is incited to travel *ofer holma gelagu*, 'over the expanse of the seas' (*Sea* 64a). The reference to *waþema gebind* in *The Wanderer* is an instance of pathetic fallacy in which the enclosing waves reflect 'the speaker's own suppressed and locked-in thoughts and emotions'.[57] This leaves two

Smithers, 'The Meaning of *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*', *Medium Ævum*, 26 (1957), 137–53 (p. 150); and Helena Znojemská, 'Sailing the Dangerous Waters: Images of Land and Sea in *The Seafarer*, *The Panther* and *The Whale*', *Prague Studies in English*, 24 (2005), 87–105. This is also detectable in Andrew's sea-journey in *Andreas*, as discussed in Chapter 3.

[55] *The Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, pp. 38–9, at 38; cf. also *Res* 97b–103a and *Chr II* 850–66.

[56] *The Wanderer*, ed. by Dunning and Bliss, p. 42; and Lars Malmberg, '*The Wanderer*: *waþema gebind*', *NM*, 71 (1970), 96–9; but cf. *The Wanderer*, ed. by Leslie, p. 70; and *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, p. 110. For the sense of 'expanse' or 'volume', see Bosworth–Toller, s.v. *gebind*, II: 'a measure of quantity'; and *DOE*, s.v. *gebind*, 1: 'perhaps "enclosure […]"'.

[57] Orchard, 'Re-Reading *The Wanderer*', pp. 10–11, at 10; cf. Cook, '*Woriað þa winsalo*', p. 130. On pathetic fallacy in *The Wanderer*, see Neville, pp. 48–9; and on this phenomenon in medieval literature more generally, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), pp. 92–4.

ways of interpreting *waþema gebind*: either as the monotonous vastness of the rolling waves which make the Wanderer feel hemmed on all sides in or, as Rosemary Greentree suggests, as the relative height of the waves as seen from sea level which limit the Wanderer's view of the horizon and therefore appear to 'bind' him from his perspective.[58] The precise understanding of this repeated half-line is less important, though, than the fact that unchanging, and disorienting, homogeneous space reflects the Wanderer's anxieties about separation and displacement, and contrasts with the sense of familiarity and security provided by being in place on land—the theme developed most fully in the second half of the poem, as has already been discussed.

In contrast, in *The Seafarer*, the sense of security and belonging provided by the place of the hall is rejected by the Seafarer as he looks ahead to heavenly 'transcendent hall joys'—*dream mid dugeþum*, 'joy amongst the retainers' (*Sea* 80a)—and, more explicitly, to *hyht in heofonum*, 'joy in Heaven' (122a).[59] The Seafarer contrasts his own experience with that of *se þe ah lifes wyn / gebiden in burgum*, 'the one who has experienced the joy of life in the cities' (27b–8a), whose inhabitants are *wlonc ond wingal*, 'proud and wine-wanton' (29a), like the old inhabitants of the ruined building in *The Wanderer*. And just as the binding seas reflect the Wanderer's inner turmoil (*Wan* 24, 57), nightfall, snow, frost and hail (*Sea* 31–5) urge the Seafarer on but foreshadow his own anxieties about the journey he has decided to take, expressed in lines 36–43.[60] After the Seafarer rejects the joys of communal life in the earthly hall (44–6), thoughts of blossoming groves, fair cities, and beautiful plains (48–50)[61] compel *modes fusne*, 'the one eager of spirit' (50b), and *þam þe swa þenceð / on flodwegas feor*

[58] Rosemary Greentree, 'The Wanderer's Horizon: A Note on *ofer waþema gebind*', *Neophilologus*, 86 (2002), 307–9.
[59] Magennis, 'The Solitary Journey', p. 305.
[60] Note that the speaker of *Resignation* talks of his longing to make a sea voyage in lines 96b–104, but this idea is not developed as fully as it is in *The Wanderer* or *The Seafarer*.
[61] On the importance of these lines in understanding the Christian symbolism of the following lines, see Phyllis Gage Whittier, 'Spring in *The Seafarer* 48–50', *NQ*, 213 (1968), 407–9.

gewitan, ‘the one who thinks thus to depart far over the ocean paths’ (51b–2).[62] The Seafarer situates himself amongst those *þe þa wræclastas widost lecgað*, ‘who follow the exile-paths farthest’ (57), and he describes his journey thus:

> Forþon nu min hyge hweorfeð   ofer hreþerlocan,
> min modsefa   mid mereflode
> ofer hwæles eþel   hweorfeð wide,
> eorþan sceatas,   cymeð eft to me
> gifre ond grædig,   gielleð anfloga,
> hweteð on hwælweg   hreþer unwearnum
> ofer holma gelagu,   for þon me hatran sind
> dryhtnes dreamas   þonne þis deade lif
> læne on londe.   Ic gelyfe no
> þæt him eorðwelan   ece stondað.
>
> [And so my spirit now journeys beyond my breast,
> my heart journeys with the sea-flood
> widely over the whale’s homeland,
> [over] the expanse of the earth, returns to me
> eager and greedy; the lone-flyer cries out,
> incites the heart irresistibly on the whale-way
> over the expanse of the seas, because to me are warmer
> the joys of the Lord than this dead life,
> fleeting, on land. I do not believe
> that earthly prosperity will endure forever.] (*Sea* 58–67)

The adverbs *feor*, ‘far’ (52b), *widost* (57b), and *wide*, ‘widely’ (60b), along with the repeated use of the preposition *ofer*, ‘over’ or ‘beyond’ (58b, 60a, 64a), convey the great distances that the Seafarer’s *hyge*, ‘spirit’ (58a), or *modsefa*, ‘heart’ (59a), journeys over the sea, which is described as *flodwegas*, ‘ocean paths’ (52a), *mereflode*, ‘sea-flood’ (59b), *holma gelagu*, ‘the expanse of the seas’ (64a), *hwæles eþel*, ‘the whale’s homeland’ (60a), and similarly (emended from MS *wæl weg*) *hwælweg*, ‘the whale-way’ (63a).[63] The Seafarer has exchanged his own

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[62] For a discussion of the difficult syntax in these lines (especially concerning the dative singular *þam*), see Bruce Mitchell, ‘The Syntax of *The Seafarer*, Lines 50–52’, *RES*, n.s. 36 (1985), 535–7, who leaves open the question (as I do) as to whether it is a person or a disembodied mind here which ‘thinks thus to depart far over the ocean paths’.

[63] Cf. *hronrad*/*hranrad*, ‘whale-road’, in *Beo* 10a, *And* 266a, 634a, 818, and *GenA* 205a. On *hwælweg*, see *The Seafarer*, ed. by Gordon, p. 42; and *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, p. 139; but Smithers, pp. 137–40, who retains the MS reading (i.e. *wæl*, ‘dead body, the slain’).

homeland for that of the whale, just as he has memorably exchanged the company of men in the hall for that of various species of sea bird (18–26).[64] Moreover, the enclosed internal space of the Seafarer's mind, heart, and spirit—referred to repeatedly throughout the first half of the poem[65]—is freed and sent out over the open external space of the sea's expanse.[66] Like the *dream mid dugeþum* (*Sea* 80a), the *dryhtnes dreamas*, 'joys of the lord' (65a), associated here with the Seafarer's journey over the sea, are 'warmer' (*hatran*, 64b) to him *þonne þis deade lif, / læne on londe*, 'than this dead life, fleeting on the land' (65b–6a), verbalising emphatically the contrast between the earthy and heavenly communities, and by extension between the earthly and heavenly places. It is at this point, too, that the shift to the 'homiletic' and 'more impersonal second half of the poem' takes place, in which the Seafarer, like the Wanderer, reflects further on the nature of earthly transience: *Ic gelyfe no / þæt him eorðwelan ece stondað*, 'I do not believe that worldly prosperity lasts forever' (66b–7).[67] Untethered from earthly space, the Seafarer has his sights firmly set on heavenly place.

The difference in tone of *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer* is readily apparent, as are the two poems' treatments of place, as well as space. For the Wanderer, human place on land is to be remembered fondly, even nostalgically, though it now stands for what he has lost and for the transience of earthly life; the surrounding space of the sea's expanse, in contrast, reflects his current sorrowful state of mind and status as an exile. As Edward Casey has put it,

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[64] For recent discussion, see Michael J. Warren, 'Native Foreigners: Migrating Seabirds and the Pelagic Soul in *The Seafarer*', *ES*, 98, 8 (2017), 825–45.
[65] At lines 11a, 12a, 26a, 34a, 36a, 37a, 44a, 51a, 55a, 58a, 59a, and 63b.
[66] In this passage, *anfloga*, 'lone-flier' (62b), has been understood as referring to a cuckoo, for which see *Die altenglische Elegie*, ed. by Sieper, p. 277; *The Seafarer*, ed. by Gordon, pp. 41–2; and Peter Orton, '*The Seafarer* 58–64a', *Neophilologus*, 66 (1982), 450–9; but Clemoes, '*Mens absentia cogitans* in *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*', in *Medieval Literature and Civilization Studies in Memory of G. N. Garmonsway*, ed. by Derek A. Pearsall and R.A. Waldron (London: Bloomsbury, 1969), p. 64, n. 3, rejects such a reading. Diekstra, '*The Seafarer* 58–66a', p. 433, and Vivian Salmon, '*The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, and the Old English Conception of the Soul', *MLR*, 55 (1960), 1–7 (esp. pp. 6–7), view it as a 'soul-bird' and 'the soul in its bird form', respectively. Like Clemoes, Whitelock, p. 266, takes *anfloga* to refer to the Seafarer's *hyge* (58a), a reading which I follow here. For a recent analysis of the use of the metaphor of avian migration in the poem, especially in relation to this passage, see Warren, pp. 837–41.
[67] *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, pp. 139, 35.

‘Separation from place is perhaps most poignantly felt in the forced homelessness of […] the involuntary exile’, a fitting description indeed of the Wanderer’s situation.[68] For the Seafarer, however, place and human society—encapsulated in his pithy reference to *þis deade lif, / læne on londe*—are to be shunned, whereas the tribulations of travel by sea and of exile are to be embraced as a means of coming closer to the joys of God (*dryhtnes dreamas*) and of the heavenly community (*dream mid dugeþum*). The respectively involuntary and voluntary nature of exile in *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, then, have a bearing on how place is construed in each poem. Respectively, these poems offer a commentary on the fleetingness both of any given place on earth from one moment to the next (e.g. the hall) and of earth itself as man’s place during life. Although Heaven is presented in both poems as the ultimate place for the faithful, only the Seafarer actively seeks it out: he looks forward to heavenly joys, whilst the Wanderer looks back to the hall life that he has lost. In the next part of this discussion, it will be shown that the symbolism of the hall itself is less important to the female speaker of *The Wife’s Lament* than is her separation from her loved one(s). The place in which she finds herself is, to a certain extent, an inversion of the normal experience of place in the hall, an experience which is expressed most fully in the mere of Grendel’s mother—another isolated female figure—as discussed in Chapter 4.[69]

Displacement and emplacement in The Wife’s Lament *15–17*

The final poem to be considered in this chapter is *The Wife’s Lament*, a dramatic monologue uttered by a female speaker, who laments her unfavourable change in fortunes and separation from her lord. There is, to quote Paul Battles, a ‘bewildering variety of interpretations’ of the

[68] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, p. x.
[69] Howe, *Writing the Map*, p. 66.

poem, arising from the ambiguities of narrative, imagery, syntax, and structure; indeed, John Niles suggests that the poem 'can be read as the rhetoric of deliberate ambiguity'.[70] This is not to say, of course, that anything goes; on the contrary, as the discussion below will show, a number of philological points need to be addressed in order to ascertain the probable nature of the Wife's place of exile. Indeed, one common theme in each of the interpretations put forward by critics is that of exile, whether literal or figurative, and especially the gendered aspect of the exile suffered by the poem's speaker.[71] Like the Wanderer and the Seafarer, the Wife of *The Wife's Lament* bemoans how *a ic wite won minra wræcsiþa*, 'I have always suffered the torment of my exile-experiences (or 'exile-journeys')' (*Wif* 5; cf. 38b), which have reduced her to a *wineleas wræcca*, 'a friendless exile' (10a).[72] That the Wife's account is a personal one is set out in the opening lines of the poem, according to which she will utter *giedd* […] *bi me ful geomorre, / minre sylfre sið*, 'a tale about myself, very sad, [about] my own experience' (1–2a).[73] Her suffering has been caused, firstly, by the departure of her lord *heonan of leodum / ofer yþa gelac*, '*hence* from his people *over* the tossing of the waves' (6–7a), and secondly, by the wish of her lord's kinsmen *þæt wit gewidost in woruldrice / lifdon laðlicost*, 'that we two should live most hatefully, *as far apart* in the world as possible' (13–14a); the spatial aspect of their separation is highlighted in these lines by the prepositions and adverbs *heonan*, *ofer*, and *gewidost*.[74] Additionally, the Wife and her husband's separation *ge**wid**ost in **woruld**rice* is

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[70] Paul Battles, 'Of Graves, Caves, and Subterranean Dwellings: *Eorðscræf* and *eorðsele* in *The Wife's Lament*', *Philological Quarterly*, 73 (1994), 267–86 (p. 267); John D. Niles, *Old English Enigmatic Poems and the Play of the Texts*, Studies in the Early Middle Ages, 13 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), p. 202. For useful summaries of earlier criticism of the poem, see Lee Ann Johnson, 'The Narrative Structure of *The Wife's Lament*', *ES*, 52 (1971), 497–501 (pp. 497–8); *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, pp. 49–54; Elinor Lench, '*The Wife's Lament*: A Poem of the Living Dead', *Comitatus*, 1 (1970), 3–23 (pp. 4–12); and *Three Old English Elegies*, ed. by Leslie, pp. 3–12.

[71] See esp. Matti Rissanen, 'The Theme of "Exile" in *The Wife's Lament*', *NM*, 70 (1969), 90–104.

[72] The Wife's experience tallies with that of the *earm*, 'miserable one', who must *ana lifgan, / wineleas wunian*, 'live alone, friendless dwell' in *Maxims I* 171–2a.

[73] On the interpretation of these opening lines, see esp. Bruce Mitchell, 'The Narrator of *The Wife's Lament*: Some Syntactical Problems Reconsidered', *NM*, 73 (1972), 222–34. For a study of the Wife's suffering and the poem's emotional landscape, see Alain Renoir, 'A Reading of *The Wife's Lament*', *ES*, 58 (1977), 4–19.

[74] Emily Jensen, '*The Wife's Lament*'s *eorðscræf*: Literal or Figurative Sign?', *NM*, 91 (1990), 449–57 (pp. 452–3).

echoed in line 46, where the husband's *__woruld__e wyn*, 'worldly joy', is contrasted with his hypothetical exile *ful __wid__e*, 'very far away'.[75] These lines emphasise further the spatial component of the Wife's estrangement from her husband, as does the Wife's bitter reflection that she must suffer the consequences of his feuding—or his figurative 'feud' with, or hostility towards, her—*feor ge neah*, 'far and near' (25b).[76] Lines 5, 10 and 13, moreover, anticipate the frequent interlinear and double alliteration on *w-* that runs through the second half of the poem in particular (discussed further below). In her confinement in a particular place, the Wife's exile differs notably from that of either the Wanderer or the Seafarer. Both of these figures are men whose exile affords them at least the freedom of space, corroborating Tuan's dictum that 'space is freedom'; however, far from offering 'security', the other half of Tuan's equation, the Wife's place of exile stands for the complete loss of freedom.[77] The Wife's experience of exile is particularly like that of the female speaker of *Wulf and Eadwacer*, who is separated from her lover on an island, as well as like that of Welund in *Deor*, who *wræces cunnade*, 'experienced exile' (*Deor* 1b), after being fettered by Niðhad; however, the spatial aspect of these speakers' exiles is evoked in only the most allusive terms.[78] In the following analysis of '[t]his most difficult of poems',[79] the Wife's emplaced experience of exile is foregrounded, with special

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[75] On such patterning and repetition in the poem, see Robert Stevick, 'Formal Aspects of *The Wife's Lament*', *JEGP*, 59 (1960), 21–25.

[76] On the meaning of *fæhðu*, 'feud', see *Three Old English Elegies*, ed. by Leslie, pp. 6–7, 55, suggesting that it refers here to the husband's feud with someone else; cf. Fiona Gameson and Richard Gameson, '*Wulf and Eadwacer*, *The Wife's Lament*, and the Discovery of the Individual in Old English Verse', in *Studies in English Language and Literature: "Doubt Wisely", Papers in Honour of E. G. Stanley*, ed. by M.J. Toswell and Elizabeth M. Tyler (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 457–74. See, however, *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, p. 183, in which Klinck disagrees with Leslie and understands it to mean 'a rift between husband and wife amounting to a feud'; cf. Niles, *Old English Enigmatic Poems*, pp. 163–4. See also Fulk in *Eight Old English Poems*, ed. by Pope, p. 126, who is more ambivalent.

[77] Rissanen, p. 102; Tuan, p. 3.

[78] Note that the Old Norse account of Vǫlundr (OE Weland/Welund) in *Vǫlundarkviða* offers, by contrast, a vivid and detailed account of Vǫlundr's fettering and imprisonment on the island of Sævarstaðr. For the text and a translation, see *Edda*, ed. by Neckel, rev. by Kuhn, pp. 116–23; and *The Poetic Edda*, trans. by Carolyne Larrington, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 98–104. For a comprehensive treatment of other Germanic analogues, especially of exiled women, in OE, ON, and OHG, see Alain Renoir, 'A Reading Context for *The Wife's Lament*', in *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Essays in Appreciation for John C. McGalliard*, ed. by Lewis E. Nicholson and Dolores Warwick Frese (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), pp. 224–41.

[79] Fulk in *Eight Old English Poems*, ed. by Pope, p. 120.

attention paid to a number of critical words and phrases which define her experience of place, namely: *her heard/herheard* (15b), *on þissum londstede* (16b), and lines 27–32a and 36, which describe the Wife's dwelling place in more detail. Central to what follows is the attempt to identify the most probable solution to the notorious crux in the poem: the meaning of the manuscript reading *her heard/herheard* (15b).

If space is what separates the Wife from her lord, then her experience as an exile is conveyed through her localisation in place. On the first reading, the Wife's lord orders her *her heard niman*, 'to take (some form of) a dwelling(?) *here*' (15b), and she has few friends *on þissum londstede*, 'in *this* land' (16b), that is the land where she utters her lament. Precisely what the Wife has been ordered to take or to take up in this line, however, is unclear: the crux found in line 15b has prompted numerous solutions, few of them satisfactory. In order to offer a satisfactory reading of these lines, each of the solutions proposed by critics will be addressed in turn and ruled out on metrical, stylistic, or contextual grounds. The earliest attempt to account for the form *her heard* or *herheard*—there is a line-break in the manuscript after *her*—was John Conybeare's suggestion that *heard* be understood adverbially as 'in hardship', though this would surely warrant the adverbial form *hearde*, and besides, leaves *mec* as the only possible direct object of *niman*.[80] Others took the form to be the name, Herheard, but this has not been taken up by critics since, not least because the name is not attested anywhere.[81] Walter Sedgefield understood *heard* as an adjective modifying an implied noun meaning 'lot', but this would have required that the poem's Anglo-Saxon audience(s) supply something not found in

[80] John J. Conybeare, *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, ed. by William D. Conybeare (London: Harding and Lepard, 1826), p. 246.
[81] *Codex Exoniensis: A Collection of Anglo-Saxon Poetry, from a Manuscript in the Library of the Dean and Chapter of Exeter*, ed. and trans. by Benjamin Thorpe (London: The Society of Antiquaries of London, 1842), p. 442; and, following Thorpe, *Engla and Seaxna Scôpas and Bôceras: Anglosaxonum poëtae atque scriptores prosaici, quorum partim integra opera, partim loca selecta*, ed. by Ludwig Ettmüller (Quedlinburg and Leipzig: Godofredus Bassius, 1850), p. 215. The name does not appear in *The Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England (PASE)*, ed. by Janet L. Nelson and others (London: King's College London, 2010) <https://pase.ac.uk/index.html> [accessed 10 May 2021].

the text.[82] Some commentators have viewed *heard* as a postponed adjective, meaning 'harsh, severe', and modifying *hlaford* in the on-verse, but as Robert Fulk comments, 'the syntax would be unusual'.[83] Other critics have proposed that *her* and *heard* refer directly to the Wife's surroundings: Elinor Lench understands *heard* as somehow modifying an otherwise unattested nominalised *her*, reading *herheard* as 'hard place', whilst Carole Hough similarly suggests that *heard* postmodifies *her*, citing place-names containing the element Hard- as evidence.[84]

Others still have emended *heard* to *eard*, 'dwelling, country, region', accounting for the *h-* as an instance of unetymological or 'unstable' *h*, a phenomenon which is found elsewhere in the Exeter Book.[85] However, as Donald Scragg has shown, occasional instances of 'unstable' *h* are unlikely to 'reflect "actual" pronunciation' in Old English texts before c. 1000,[86] which would indicate here that the form in question is to be understood as it is written, that is *heard*, not *eard*. Yet whilst on semantic grounds, *eard* is probably the most satisfying and straightforward solution, it is metrically untenable. Although Leslie rightly notes that *eard niman*, 'to take up a dwelling', is idiomatic Old English (cf. *PPs* 131 15/3a: *þær ic eard nime*),

[82] *An Anglo-Saxon Verse Book*, ed. by Walter J. Sedgefield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1922), p. 158.
[83] Stanley B. Greenfield, '*The Wife's Lament* Reconsidered', *PMLA*, 68 (1953), 907–12 (pp. 908–9); *Anglo-Saxon and Norse Poems*, ed. and trans. by Nora Kershaw (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), pp. 32–3; *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, pp. 50, 181; *The Exeter Book, Part II*, ed. by Mackie, p. 153; and Svetislav Stefanovic, 'Das angelsächsische Gedicht *Die Klage der Frau*', *Anglia*, 32 (1909), 399–433 (p. 408); but Fulk in *Eight Old English Poems*, ed. by Pope, p. 124.
[84] Lench, pp. 14, 21, n. 48; and Carole Hough, '*The Wife's Lament* Line 15b and *Daniel* Line 499b: Two Notes on Place-Name Evidence', *English Language Notes*, 35 (1998), 1–4 (pp. 1–2, at 2). Note A.H. Smith, *English Place-name Elements*, 2 vols, English Place-Name Society, 25–26 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), I: *Introduction, A–IW*, p. 239, s.v. *heard*, who observes that '[i]ts usual meanings are "hard to till" (of the soil), "cheerless" (of dwellings)', but that it is rare in place-names. Either way, it could not modify the adverb *her*, 'here'.
[85] *Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Poesie*, ed. by Christian W.M. Grein, 2 vols (Göttingen: Wigand, 1857–1858), I: *Text I* (1857), p. 245; *Three Old English Elegies*, ed. by Leslie, pp. 6, 47, 54; *Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, I, p. 328, and II, p. 665; and *Die altenglische Elegie*, ed. by Sieper, p. 136. However, Muir's cross-reference here to p. 36 of his edition's introduction is rather misleading, since there he cites only scribal confusion of *h* and *n*, not extraneous word-initial *h* before a vowel. This latter phenomenon can be found, for instance, in *Rim* 74b, MS *heardes*, which, since *Engla and Seaxna Scôpas and Bôceras*, ed. by Ettmüller, p. 223, has been unanimously emended to *eardes* so that it takes part in the vocalic alliteration in *seo me eðles ofonn* (*Rim* 74a); see *Old English Riming Poem*, ed. by Macrae-Gibson, pp. 34–5. For detailed discussion of 'unstable' or 'unhistoric' word-initial *h-*, see Donald G. Scragg, 'Initial *H* in Old English', *Anglia*, 88 (1970), 165–96 (esp. pp. 175–6 on the Exeter Book scribe).
[86] Scragg, 'Initial *H*', p. 196.

his assertion that *Maxims II* 64b (*þe þæt her for soð*) is an appropriate analogue to the alliterative pattern in *The Wife's Lament* 15b is mistaken.[87] In *Maxims II* 64b, the only word which can possibly bear the first stress in this off-verse is the particle *her*, not only since the alliteration in this line is on *h*, but also because neither the particles *þe* and *þæt* nor the proclitic *for* could bear stress anyway.[88] And though in *The Wife's Lament* 15b, the alliteration is also on *h*, metrically, only the stress-words *heard* (or an emended form of it) or the posited form *herheard* (discussed below) can take part in the alliteration: *her*, a particle, could not bear stress if followed by the stress-word *heard* or *eard*. As Fulk points out, the most appropriate analogue in Old English verse is *her bu namon*, 'took up a dwelling here' (*PPs* 101 25/1b), in which the alliteration, crucially, is on *b*, not *h*.[89] Another fitting analogue is to be found in *Guthlac B*, in which Guthlac states that he is eager *upeard niman*, 'to take up a dwelling above' (*Guth B* 1078a); here the stress falls, of course, on *up-* and not *-eard*, however.

The next solution to be considered—first proposed by Christian Grein, who rescinded his earlier emendation to *eard*—rests on reading *herheard* as an alternative form of the otherwise unattested *hearheard* or *heargeard*, 'dwelling in a heathen sanctuary', from *hearg*, 'heathen place of worship', and *eard*. Grein cited *on wuda bearwe*, 'in a wooded grove' (*Wif* 27b), Old High German *haruc*, 'pile of stones, altar, sacred place', cognate with Old English *hearg*, and the Latin *lucus*, 'sacred grove', in support of this 'improvement' on his initial reading.[90] Whilst the form *herh* would be, according to Fulk, 'a plausible Anglian spelling for

[87] *Three Old English Elegies*, ed. by Leslie, p. 54.
[88] Although he explicitly excludes this type of verse from his discussion of the 'transformational rule', Calvin B. Kendall, *The Metrical Grammar of Beowulf*, CSASE, 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 90–1, notes an example of this type of verse in *Beowulf* 3003b: *þone ðe ær geheold*, in which the monosyllabic adverb *ær*, a particle, bears the stress and participates in the alliteration. See also Bruce Mitchell, *Old English Syntax*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985; repr. 1987), II: *Subordination, Independent Elements, and Element Order*, p. 125 (§2175). My thanks are due to Rafael J. Pascual for sharing his thoughts on the metrical scansion of the lines discussed here.
[89] Fulk in *Eight Old English Poems*, ed. by Pope, p. 124.
[90] *Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Poesie*, ed. by Grein, II: *Text II* (1858), p. 414 ('Verbesserung'), and 'Zur Textkritik der angelsächsischen Dichter', *Germania*, 10 (1865), 416–29 (p. 422). See also, e.g., *ASPR*, ed. by Krapp and Dobbie, III, pp. 210, 352 (and other early critics cited there); Niles, *God's Exiles*, pp. 236–7; Peter J. Orton, '*The Wife's Lament* and *Skírnismál*: Some Parallels', in *Úr Dölum til Dala: Guðbrandur Vigfússon*

hearg', the semantics of this reading seem to be rather less credible in this context.[91] Under the entry for *hearg*, *The Dictionary of Old English* offers the meaning 'sacred grove', which is found twice as a gloss to the Latin *lucus*, '(sacred) grove', in the Old English glosses of the mid-tenth-century manuscript, London, British Library, MS Cotton Cleopatra A.iii, at fols. 56v and 101v.[92] Although Grein provided *lucus* alongside OHG *haruc* in his edition of *The Wife's Lament*, he offered no indication as to where he took the Latin word from.[93] And whilst Peter Baker's and Bruce Mitchell and Fred Robinson's student editions might ordinarily necessitate a more-or-less straightforward pronouncement on the meaning of the most difficult forms encountered in their anthologies of texts, their respective notes stating that this meaning is the 'obvious sense' and that *herh-* 'probably means "grove" here' seem overly confident in light

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Centenary Essays, ed. by Rory McTurk and Andrew Wawn, Leeds Texts and Monographs, n.s. 11 (Leeds: Leeds Studies in English, 1989), pp. 209–15; and Karl P. Wentersdorf, 'The Situation of the Narrator in the Old English *Wife's Lament*', *Speculum*, 56 (1970), 492–516 (pp. 508–9). For further discussion of these forms, see *DOE*, s.v. *herheard* and *hearg*; for cognate forms in other Gmc languages, see Vladimir Orel, *A Handbook of Germanic Etymology* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), p. 164 (s.v. *xaruʒaz*). For place-name evidence containing the element *hearg-*, see Sarah Semple, 'Defining the OE *hearg*: A Preliminary Archaeological and Topographic Examination of *hearg* Place Names and their Hinterlands', *Early Medieval Europe*, 15 (2007), 364–85; Smith, *English Place-name Elements*, I, pp. 239–40; and Wentersdorf, 'The Situation of the Narrator', pp. 504–5. Given that all attested referents of *hearg* are heathen subjects or places of worship, the suggestion by Richard North, 'Radegund and Amalfrid in *The Wife's Lament*', in *The Lifespan of Medieval English Literature, 900–1550: Discontinuity and Renewal*, ed. by Anun Carrera de la Red (forthcoming, no date given), that *herheard* may refer here to a Christian temple is surely the least compelling interpretation of all.

[91] Fulk in *Eight Old English Poems*, ed. by Pope, p. 124. Note that in Mercian, early OE /æɑ/ is monophthongised to /æ/ before a palatal consonant, which is then typically raised to /e/ before /r/, hence the plausible Mercian form *herh-*, as seen in *herg* in the Vespasian Psalter, but cf. *haerg*(*a*) in the Corpus Glossary, for which see Richard Hogg and R.D. Fulk, *A Grammar of Old English*, 2 vols (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992–2011), I: Hogg, *Phonology* (1992), pp. 144–5.

[92] DOE, s.v. *hearg*, 1.c. For a facsimile of this manuscript, see 'Cotton MS Cleopatra A III', *British Library* <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Cleopatra_A_III> [accessed 18 May, 2021]. At fol. 56v, *lucum* appears next to *Lupercal*, which is glossed *hearh*. However, as John J. Quinn, 'The Minor Latin-Old English Glossaries in MS. Cotton Cleopatra A.III' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Stanford, 1956), p. 138, notes, at fol. 101v the glossator of Cotton Cleopatra A.iii provided *hearg* for *lucum*, 'grove', when his source text had *lacum*, 'lake'.

[93] *Bibliothek*, ed. by Grein, II, p. 414. The first edition of the OE glosses in MS Cotton Cleopatra A.iii appeared 15 years after the publication of *Bibliothek*, ed. by Grein, in *A Volume of Vocabularies: Illustrating the Condition and Manners of Our Forefathers, as well as the History of the Forms of Elementary Education and of the Languages Spoken in this Island, from the Tenth Century to the Fifteenth*, ed. by Thomas Wright, 2 vols (n.p.: privately printed, 1873), II, in which *lucum*/*hearga* occurs at pp. 51 and 82. *Die Althochdeutschen Glossen*, ed. by Elias Steinmeyer and Eduard Sievers, 5 vols (Berlin: Weidmann, 1879–1922) also appeared too late for Grein, nor, in any case, does there appear to be a lemma/gloss pair consisting of *lucus*/*haruc* (or *harug*) in these glosses.

of the merely circumstantial evidence advanced in support of this reading.[94] Tantalising though this interpretation may be, the burden of proof rests firmly on those who would locate the Wife in some sort of heathen sanctuary, and as Mitchell and Robinson themselves state, '[T]he only available curb to ever more ingenious speculations about *The Wife's Lament* is common sense.'[95] Locating the Wife in a heathen sanctuary necessarily begs the following 'common sense' questions: Why should the Wife be sent specifically to a heathen sacred place? And would a Christian reader of the poem—in the absence of any other references to heathenism in the text—have understood the word in this way?[96]

There will probably never be entirely satisfactory answers to these questions, but it is nonetheless worth considering a few pieces of external evidence. Tacitus's fleeting reference to tree worship in *Germania* 9 is conventionally invoked in discussions of pre-Christian worship amongst Germanic peoples: *lucos ac nemora consecrant*, 'they consecrate groves and woods'.[97] Although this is a very early account of little direct relevance,[98] throughout the early medieval period the Church aggressively suppressed the continued worship of trees and groves amongst unconverted Germanic peoples, a policy enshrined in ecclesiastical edicts; even as late as the eleventh century, Burchard, bishop of Worms (d. 1025), had sacred trees cut down and, most famously, Charlemagne had the sacred tree, or tree-like symbol, Irminsûl (OS 'great pillar') destroyed in 772.[99] Bede also refers to heathen places of worship—but not to sacred

[94] Peter Baker, *Introduction to Old English*, 3rd edn (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), p. 260, n. 7; Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson, *A Guide to Old English*, 8th edn (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), p. 274, n. 15, cf. the entry in the glossary at p. 372: 'abode in a grove'.
[95] Mitchell and Robinson, *Guide to Old English*, p. 273. However, see Niles's caution against invoking 'common sense' in John D. Niles, 'Introduction', in *A Beowulf Handbook*, ed. by Bjork and Niles, p. 9.
[96] Cf. *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, p. 50. Baker, *Introduction to Old English*, p. 260, n. 7, cites *Beo* 3072—*hergum geheaðerod, hellbendum fæst*, 'confined in a pagan shrine, secured with hellish bonds'—as evidence in support of this reading; however, heathenism is a central aspect of the world of *Beowulf*.
[97] Tacitus, *Cornelii Taciti Opera Minora*, ed. by Winterbottom and Ogilvie, p. 42.
[98] As argued by Toswell, 'Tacitus', and noted in the previous chapter.
[99] Della Hooke, 'Christianity and the "Sacred Tree"', in *Trees and Timber in the Anglo-Saxon World*, ed. by Michael D.J. Bintley and Michael G. Shapland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 231; and Wentersdorf, 'The Situation of the Narrator', pp. 505–8. For fuller accounts, see also Della Hooke, *Trees in Anglo-Saxon England: Literature, Lore and Landscape* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), pp. 3–20; and Michael D.J. Bintley, *Trees in the Religions of Early Medieval England* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2015), pp. 25–68.

groves—in his *Historia ecclesiastica* I.30, II.15, and II.30, including in his citation of Gregory the Great's famous letter to Abbot Mellitus in which Gregory recommends a rather more pragmatic, syncretic approach to conversion than either Burchard or Charlemagne adopted.[100]

Is it plausible, then, to suppose that the *wuda bearu* signified some form of heathen sacred grove in *The Wife's Lament* 27b? It is a word which occurs 'disproportionately freq[uently] in poetry', in which its meaning is almost universally, and more simply, 'grove, wood'.[101] In *Riddle* 53.1–3a, found just three folios before *The Wife's Lament* in the Exeter Book, a *bearu* is said to be home to *beam hlifian /* [...] *treow* [...] *on wynne, / wudu weaxende*, 'a towering trunk, a joyful tree, wood growing', later to be cut down and turned into a battering ram; notably the words *bearu*, *wudu*, and *treow* are also occur together in *The Wife's Lament* 27–8. Additionally, according to *Maxims II* 18b–19a, *wulf sceal on bearowe, / earm anhage*, 'a wolf must be in a wood, a wretched lone-dweller', which serves to underline only that groves lie outside of human control, and are home to solitary beings, much like the Wife of *The Wife's Lament* herself.[102] And in the description of the mere in which Grendel and his mother, two other quasi-solitary beings, reside, the surrounding topography features *hrinde bearwas, / wudu wyrtum fæst*, 'frost-covered groves, a wood, fixed with roots' (*Beo* 1363b–4a).[103] Although the mere's inhabitants are antithetical to Christian society, and Grendel is referred to as a heathen in lines 852a and 986a of *Beowulf*, the only overtly heathen worship in the poem is carried out by the Danes, whose *hæþenra hyht*, 'hope of heathens' (179a), leads them vainly to make offerings to pagan idols.[104] If these three instances of *bearu* are ambivalent in their religious

[100] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 106–9, 188–91, 322–3.
[101] *DOE*, s.v. *bearu*. It typically means 'sacred grove' in prose texts, especially in translations of Latin works.
[102] Cf. ON *vargr* which means both 'wolf' and 'outlaw', another term for which is *skógumaðr*, literally 'forest-man'. See Richard Cleasby *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, ed. and rev. by Gudbrand Vigfusson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1874), s.v. *vargr* and *skógumaðr*. Note as well the description of exile amongst wolves in *Maxims I* 145–50.
[103] For a comparison of the *hrinde bearwas* of *Beowulf* with the classical, and especially Virgilian, tradition, see Richard J. Schrader, 'Sacred Groves, Marvellous Waters, and Grendel's Abode', *Florilegium*, 5 (1983), 76–84.
[104] See *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. 127–8; and Eric G. Stanley, '*Hæþenra hyht* in *Beowulf*', in *Studies in Old English Literature*, ed. Greenfield, pp. 136–51.

connotations, then surely the following examples militate against a default understanding of *bearu* as a 'pagan sacred grove' in *The Wife's Lament*. In *Metrical Psalm* 104, God's plagues prevent the Egyptians from bringing forth fruit *ne bearwa treow*, 'nor trees in the woods' (PPs 104.29/3b). And, as discussed in the first part of this chapter, the Seafarer rejects thoughts of idyllic blossoming groves (*Bearwas blostmum nimað*, *Sea* 48a), which urge him on to his sea journey in search of the heavenly community.[105] Furthermore, *Judgement Day II* opens with the poem's Christian speaker announcing, *Hwæt! Ic ana sæt innan bearwe*, 'Listen! I sat alone in a grove' (*JDay II* 1), and goes on to describe an idyllic setting—an example of the *locus amoenus*, 'pleasant place'—in which *þa wudubeamas wagedon and swegdon*, 'the trees swayed and rustled' (7).[106] In another gesture towards the *locus amoenus* in *Andreas*, Andrew sees *geblowene bearwas standan*, 'groves standing in bloom' (*And* 1448), where the saint's blood has been spilt on the streets of Mermedonia. Finally, in the most developed instance of the *locus amoenus* in all of Old English poetry, *The Phoenix* describes how, in the place where the phoenix resides, *sunbearo lixeð, / wuduholt wynlic*, 'the sunny grove shines, a joyful wood' (*Phoen* 33b–4a), and *Sindon þa bearwas bledum gehongne, / wlitigum wæstmum*, 'The groves are hung with fruits, delightful crops' (*Phoen* 71–2a).[107] These last five overtly Christian poems demonstrate that *bearu* certainly need not be assumed to have pagan, or even necessarily sacred, connotations, though Ananya Kabir points out that groves are to be found in various descriptions of Paradise in Old English.[108] In the entry for *bearu* in *The Dictionary of Old English*, the only citations of poetic examples where 'sacred grove, small wood (planted) as a site for religious observance' is intended are *Genesis A* 2841b and *Guthlac A* 148a. The first of

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[105] Like the cuckoo with its sorrowful voice in *The Seafarer* 53–5a, the recipient of the inscribed message in *The Husband's Message* is advised to travel over the sea when she hears *galan geomorne geac on bearwe*, 'the sad cuckoo singing in the wood' (*Husb* 23).
[106] The *locus amoenus* is discussed in Chapter 3, and contrasted with the *locus terribilis* in Chapter 4.
[107] *The Phoenix* is discussed in the context of the *locus amoenus* in Chapter 3. For general discussion of some of these examples, see Della Hooke, 'Groves in Anglo-Saxon England', *Landscape History*, 38 (2017), 5–23 (pp. 7–8).
[108] Ananya Jahanara Kabir, *Paradise, Death and Doomsday in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, CSASE, 32 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 143–4.

these describes Abraham's construction of a city and planting of a grove under the instruction of an angel, whilst the second refers to Guthlac's establishment of his *haligne ham*, 'holy home' (*Guth A* 149) in a grove or wood; neither of these, clearly, is a site of pagan worship.[109] However, in the prose text *Alexander's Letter to Aristotle*, Alexander and his men do pray to pagan gods *in þone godcundan bearo*, 'in that sacred grove', and *in þone halgan bearo*, 'in that holy grove', although this is perhaps unsurprising given the text's apparent disdain for Alexander's heathen pride.[110] Nonetheless, as I shall stress below, the most important thing about the use of *bearu* in *The Wife's Lament* is that the Wife is banished to a remote and unpleasant place beyond the walls of any human settlement. For the purpose of this discussion, though, the examples given here suggest that there is no reason to assume that the occurrence of *bearu* in *The Wife's Lament* 27b favours the reading *herheard*, 'dwelling in a heathen sanctuary'. Nonetheless, Klinck's assertion that '[i]t is very likely that the location was intended to *evoke superstitious associations or lingering memories* of heathen practices' is not an unreasonable one, but superstitious associations and lingering memories do not a heathen shrine make.[111]

The final—and, to reprise Mitchell and Robinson's words, most 'common sense'—hypothesis about the meaning of *her heard* is that put forward by Fulk in his revision to John Pope's own student textbook: Fulk suggests that *heard* is a misreading of the syncopated Mercian form *heord* (from *heorod*), of which the West Saxon form would be *hir*(*e*)*d*, 'household', the form given in his text.[112] This reading, which is the most fitting solution on

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[109] *DOE*, s.v. *bearu*. On religiously significant trees and groves in the Bible and in *Genesis A*, see Hooke, 'Groves in Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 8–10.

[110] *Three Old English Prose Texts in MS. Cotton Vitellius A xv*, ed. by Stanley Rypins, EETS, o.s. 161 (London: Oxford University Press, 1924), pp. 41, 44. For the low estimation of Alexander, see Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 116–39. See also note 101 above.

[111] *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, p. 49 (emphasis added); cf. Niles, *Old English Enigmatic Poems*, p. 151.

[112] Fulk in *Eight Old English Poems*, ed. by Pope, pp. 39, 125. The W-S spelling *hired* instead of *heord* is consistent with Pope's original standardisation of the texts in his collection according to W-S norms, as set out at pp. vii–viii. However, Fulk does not provide details concerning the relevant sound changes which might have given rise to these cognate forms, which derive from early OE _*hiu̯rǣd_ < PGmc _*hīwą_ ('marriage') + *rēdaz* ('advice'); for these sound changes, see Alistair Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,

metrical grounds, has been most recently accepted by Robert Bjork in his edition and translation of the poem.[113] Moreover, this Mercian form would not be out of place in a poem which ‘possess[es] distinctively Anglian features in phonology or vocabulary’, and whose ‘affinities are with Mercian rather than Northumbrian’ (though this may be said of many Old English poems as we have them).[114] Finally, not only would *heor*(*o*)*d*/*hir*(*e*)*d niman* parallel *eard niman*/*bu niman*, but its use here would, according to Fulk, be ‘more ironic in intent’ than *eard niman*, since ‘the speaker seems to represent a house-hold unto herself’.[115] Whatever the solution to this crux, though, the question still remains as to how a contemporary tenth-century reader of the poem would have understood *her heard*/*herheard* in the manuscript. In a manuscript containing many corrections—whether they were made by the original scribe or by a subsequent user of the manuscript—it is certainly interesting that *her heard*/*herheard* remains unaltered.[116] Indeed, Muir puts it more forcefully still: ‘Perhaps the most perplexing question arising from a consideration of the evidence for extensive activity by various correctors and readers of [the Exeter Book…] is why so many unintelligible forms (or *non*-words) still remain in the codex.’[117] Is *heard* or *herheard*, then, one of Muir’s ‘non-words’? Does the lack of scribal correction here suggest that the form perplexed even tenth-century readers and copyists of the poem? Whilst some of the earlier readings of *her heard*/*herheard* can be roundly dismissed—

1959; repr. 1977), p. 158 (§382). On the development of PGmc *iu* into W-S *īe* (often manifesting as the monophthong *ī*-) and non-W-S *īo* (Merc. *ēo*), see Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, pp. 46, 124–8 (§§120.3, 294, 299–301). An analogous development is visible in PGmc **hiwją*, ‘form, appearance’ > PWGmc **hiw*^{j}*w*^{j}*a*- > **hīow*^{j}- > W-S *hīew*- > *hīw*, and Anglian *hīow*- > Mercian *hēow*, ‘shape, form, hue’, as discussed in Don Ringe and Ann A. Taylor, *The Development of Old English*, A Linguistic History of English, 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 250; cf. W-S *nīwe*/non-W-S *nīowe*, ‘new’, for which see Hogg, *A Grammar of Old English*, I, pp. 57–8 (§3.18).

[113] *Old English Shorter Poems*, ed. by Christopher A. Jones and Robert E. Bjork, 2 vols, DOML, 15, 32 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012–2014), II: *Wisdom and Lyric*, ed. by Bjork (2014), pp. 104, 234.

[114] *Three Old English Elegies*, ed. by Leslie, pp. 31–4, at 33 (including examples). For further discussion of the language of the poems in the Exeter Book, see *Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, I, pp. 29–33; and Kenneth Sisam, *Studies in the History of Old English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), pp. 100–8.

[115] Fulk in *Eight Old English Poems*, ed. by Pope, p. 125.

[116] On these corrections, see *Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, I, pp. 34–40.

[117] *The Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, I, p. 35 (emphasis original); cf. Scragg, ‘Initial *H*’, pp. 190–1; and Sisam, *Studies in the History*, p. 38.

even if *heard* may well have been intelligible as an adjective to a late tenth-century user of the Exeter Book—the last three possibilities all have one thing in common: they concern the idea of taking up some form of dwelling or residence somewhere. Moreover, as was noted earlier, the Wife laments that she has few friends *on þissum londstede*, 'in *this* land' (16b). The deictic demonstrative *þissum* points to the land or country (*londstede*) where the Wife has taken up residence with her husband, and *londstede* might be considered to be in at least partial apposition—albeit as part of a separate syntactical unit—with the place taken up in line 15b, whether that is understood as *eard*, *herheard*, or *heord*/*hired*. It is reasonable, therefore, to see *her* not as being part of the same word as *heard*, but as a similarly deictic adverb—*her*, 'here'—pointing to the same place as 'this land'. If *her* is to be understood, then, as an adverb, the reading *herheard*, 'dwelling in a heathen sanctuary', becomes less tenable still. Since it has been established that *her eard niman* would be unmetrical in an otherwise metrically regular poem, the most plausible interpretation of *heard*, then, has to be as a misreading of the Mercian form *heord*.[118]

A Place without Joy: The Wife's Lament *27–32a*

Those who have accepted the reading *herheard*, 'dwelling in a heathen sanctuary', have typically assumed that *herheard* shares the same referent as *on wuda bearwe*, 'in a wooded grove' (27b), because the immediately preceding construction in line 27—*Heht mec mon wunian*, 'Someone ordered me to live'—parallels that found earlier in line 15: *Het mec hlaford min* […] *niman*, 'My lord ordered me to take…'.[119] As Leslie points out, however, the Wife's

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[118] *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, p. 53, points out the poem's metrical regularity. Note, however, the evident loss of text in line 24a, for which *Three Old English Elegies*, ed. by Leslie, p. 47, and *Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, I, p. 329, both supply *fornumen*; Fulk in *Eight Old English Poems*, ed. by Pope, pp. 40, 126, supplies *seo neawest*.
[119] See, e.g., Wentersdorf, 'The Situation of the Narrator', p. 513, n. 77.

lord 'bade her take up her abode in *this* land' where she has no friends 'as she had in her homeland', and thus she is sad, especially since her husband left 'from here' (*heonan*, 6b).[120] In the reading that I propose here, *heord* does not refer to the Wife's remote dwelling described in lines 27–8: that is, the repetition of the construction in *hatan* in line 27 is not reiterative of the situation described in line 15. Rather, these similar lines describe two different, sequential situations: first, the Wife's lord ordered her to come and 'take up a household *here*' (*her heord niman*, 15b)—i.e. in his country—which would make perfectly good sense if the Wife were joining or forming a new household with her husband in his homeland. However, Fulk, who understands the Wife already to be alone at this point in her account, suggests that the Wife's comment that she had few dear friends (16–17a) is ironic understatement, and he insists that 15–16 and 27–8 thus refer to the same situation.[121] Whilst one might well understand these lines as a characteristically litotic statement, the Wife laments her lack of friends *on þissum londstede*, 'in *this* land' or 'country, territory' (16b), in contrast with the friends which she had in her own homeland. Although some critics have cast doubt on the notion that *The Wife's Lament* follows any coherent timeline, that the Wife is relating a broadly chronological sequence of events is supported by her utterance in line 18: *Ða ic me ful gemæcne monnan funde*, '*Then* I found the man very well suited to me', i.e. only after arriving in the man's country.[122] Indeed, Karl Wentersdorf has shown that the poem is chronological in its structure, falling into four sections: a prologue outlining the principal events in the Wife's story (lines 1–10), two main narrative parts (11–26, 27–41), and an epilogue in which the Wife reflects on

[120] *Three Old English Elegies*, ed. by Leslie, pp. 5–6, at 6 (emphasis added). Leslie refutes the notion that the Wife has exiled herself to a foreign land, as suggested by Greenfield, '*The Wife's Lament* Reconsidered', pp. 907–12.
[121] Fulk in *Eight Old English Poems*, ed. by Pope, pp. 122–3; cf., e.g., Wentersdorf, 'The Situation of the Narrator', p. 513.
[122] Lench, p. 8; Douglas D. Short, 'The Old English *Wife's Lament*: An Interpretation', *NM*, 71 (1970), 585–603 (p. 588); and Wentersdorf, 'The Situation of the Narrator', pp. 494–5. For critics who dispute the poem's chronology, see Battles, 'Of Graves', p. 267; and Johnson, 'The Narrative Structure', p. 499. Of course, it is possible that this is not a temporal adverb meaning 'then', but a co-ordinating conjunction meaning 'when', beginning a sentence spanning lines 18–23a, for which see Alaric Hall, 'The Images and Structure of *The Wife's Lament*', *LSE*, n.s. 33 (2002), 1–29 (p. 15).

her plight (42–53).[123] After line 18, the Wife then goes on to describe her husband's own complex emotions and intentions (19–21a), their vow not to be separated by anything other than death (21b–3a), and their change in circumstances and separation (23b–6). It is at this point—that is, after her husband's departure and their separation from one another—that the Wife is ordered by an unspecified agent or agents (*mon*), presumably the husband's kinsmen, 'to live in a wooded grove': *Heht mec mon wunian on wuda bearwe* (27). Here the Wife describes her current location—that is, her location at the time of uttering her *giedd*—remarking *eal ic eom oflongad*, 'I *am* completely seized with longing' (29b). The present-tense *ic eom* contrasts with the past preterite *ahte ic*, 'I had', in line 16a: in other words, 'that was then, this is now'. Indeed, that the Wife is describing her most recent situation in this and the following lines is clear enough from the number of forms of *beon* in the present tense (*is*, *eom*, *sindon*).

Regardless of the poem's chronology, in these lines, the Wife describes the bleak and oppressive place in which she has ultimately been ordered to live:

> Heht mec mon wunian   on wuda bearwe,
> under actreo   in þam eorðscræfe;
> eald is þes eorðsele,   eal ic eom oflongad.
> Sindon dena dimme,   duna uphea,
> bitre burgtunas   brerum beweaxne,
> wic wynna leas.
>
> [I have been ordered to live in a wooded grove,
> under an oak tree in that earth-cave;
> this earth-hall is old, I am completely seized with longing.
> The valleys are dark, the hills steep,
> the fortified enclosures severe, overgrown with briars,
> a dwelling deprived of joys.] (*Wif* 27–32a)

[123] Wentersdorf, 'The Situation of the Narrator', pp. 494–5. I suggest that the 'prologue' ends at line 14 and that the first main part of the Wife's account begins at line 15.

This place—and the *eorðscræf* in particular—has been understood variously as a naturally occurring cave, an artificial cave or *souterrain*, an early Germanic sunken house or *Grubenhaus*, a prehistoric barrow or burial mound, a (formerly) pagan site or one at least connoting pagan worship, 'an anti-paradise, connoting hell', 'a real landscape, probably in King Offa's Mercia', and, conversely, 'a mental landscape, not a physical one'.[124] If there is any irony in this poem, it is in the use of *eorðsele*, 'earth-hall' (29a),[125] to refer back to the *eorðscræf*, 'earth-cave', found under an oak tree, in the preceding line. This *wic wynna leas*, 'dwelling deprived of joys' (32a), is surely a far cry from the hall of the Wife's husband, in which she might be supposed to have dwelt prior to her ostracisation, and which might productively be viewed as an antithesis of that hall, much as Grendel and his mother's *niðsele*, 'hostile hall' (*Beo* 1513b), is antithetical to Heorot.[126] A similarly remote dwelling is described in *Genesis A*, in which Lot and his daughters depart, *of* ***byrig*** *gangan*, 'walking, from the city (i.e. Sodom)', in order that they might ***wic*** *sceawian, / oðþæt hie be hliðe* ***heare dune*** */* ***eorðscræf*** *fundon*, 'look for a place, until they found an earth-cave by the slope of a high hill' (*Gen A* 2594a, 2595b–7a).[127] The verbal parallels with *The Wife's Lament* 27–32a, picked out in bold, are certainly intriguing; however, the situation of Lot and his daughters does not seem nearly as bleak as that of the Wife in *The Wife's Lament*, whose dwelling is again described in an idiom more redolent of the mere of Grendel and his mother. The Wife seems to have been

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[124] Wentersdorf, 'The Situation of the Narrator', pp. 498–503; Battles, 'Of Graves'; Joseph Harris, 'A Note on *eorðscræf* /*eorðsele* and Current Interpretations of *The Wife's Lament*', *ES*, 58 (1977), 204–8, and Earl R. Anderson, 'The Uncarpentered World of Old English Poetry', *ASE*, 20 (1991), 65–80 (pp. 73–6); *Three Old English Elegies*, ed. by Leslie, pp. 55–6, and Lench, pp. 17–19; A.N. Doane, 'Heathen Form and Christian Function in *The Wife's Lament*', *Mediaeval Studies*, 28 (1966), 77–91 (pp. 88–9), and *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, p. 184; Hall, 'The Images and Structure', pp. 6–7; Blair, p. 82; and, finally, Michael Lapidge, 'The Comparative Approach', in *Reading Old English Texts*, ed. by Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 34.

[125] Or simply 'earth-dwelling', for which see de Roo, 'The Old English *Sele*'.

[126] Jane Chance, *Woman as Hero in Old English Literature* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986), p. 92; Desmond, 'The Voice of Exile', p. 586; Hume, 'The Concept of the Hall', p. 64; Klein, 'Gender and the Nature of Exile', p. 126; and Magennis, *Images of Community*, p. 83. The *niðsele* of *Beowulf* is discussed further in Chapter 4.

[127] Garner, *Structuring Spaces*, pp. 172–3. However, although the Wife in *The Wife's Lament* is seized with longing, Lot and his daughters certainly do not endure the isolation to which she is subjected!

sent to a disused settlement, as suggested by the occurrence—unique in Old English literature—of *burgtunas*, 'fort/city enclosures' or 'enclosures around a *burh*' (*Wif* 31a), a word common enough, though, in place-names such as Burton and Broughton.[128] According to John Blair, this word 'seems to denote an outpost, lookout point, or other satellite of an important central place', though he goes on to suggest that the *burgtunas* of *The Wife's Lament* belong to 'a shadow world' of the dead from which the Wife cannot escape.[129] What is significant about the use of *burgtunas* here, however, is that they reaffirm that the Wife has been ordered to take up residence in a peripheral location, away from the central human settlement. In proposing that *burgtunas* are a feature of some sort of landscape of the afterlife, Blair follows Sarah Semple's claim that the Wife has taken up residence in a prehistoric burial mound, and is therefore herself dead—or, rather, undead.[130] More recently, Semple has asserted, without compelling evidence, that in the poem the words *eorðscræf* and *eorðsele* 'are potent […] in their reference [*sic*] and evocation of a place of dwelling laden with pre-Christian and hellish allusions'.[131] In contrast, Niles has affirmed that 'in the absence of explicit deaths or other thematic elements that would suggest an otherworldly dimension, there seems to be no strong reason to take these caves in any other but a literal sense'; instead, he describes this setting as only 'a dreary if not hellish landscape', labelling it a *locus horribilis*.[132] Whilst it is true that *eorðscræf* can signify 'grave, sepulchre', as it does in *The Wanderer* 84a, its primary meaning is simply 'earth-cave'.[133] That it is found in the plural in *The Wife's Lament* 36b (*þas*

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[128] Smith, *English Place-name Elements*, I, p. 62. However, citing confusion in late W-S between *burg*, 'fortified place', and *beorg*, 'hill, barrow', Hall, 'The Images and Structure', p.7, reads *bitre burgtunas* as 'bitter barrow-enclosures'.
[129] Blair, pp. 82–3, at 82; on real-world *burgtunas* as defensive structures, especially as found across Mercia, see pp. 193–228.
[130] 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 (pp. 110–13). For earlier suggestions that the Wife is dead, see Lench, esp. pp. 14–20; and William Johnson, '*The Wife's Lament* as Death-Song', in *The Old English Elegies*, ed. by Green, pp. 69–81.
[131] Semple, *Perceptions of the Prehistoric*, p. 149; cf. Hall, 'The Images and Structure', pp. 6–9.
[132] Niles, *Old English Enigmatic Poems*, pp. 151–2, and *God's Exiles*, pp. 210, 218. The *locus horribilis* is discussed in relation to the mere of Grendel and his mother in Chapter 4.
[133] *DOE*, s.v. *eorþscræf*; *The Wanderer*, ed. by Dunning and Bliss, pp. 48, 131.

eorðscrafu) also suggests that the Wife inhabits not a grave but a cave or cave complex.[134] The recent archaeological survey of an originally eighth-century artificial cave system at Anchor Church in Ingleby, Derbyshire, believed to have been inhabited by Saint Hardulph, might lend weight to such a literalist understanding of *eorðscræf* in *The Wife's Lament*.[135] Indeed, in his own interpretation, Wentersdorf marshals compelling historical, archaeological, and literary evidence to support his conclusion that there is 'no reason to believe that the audience addressed by the author of [*The Wife's Lament*] would have had any difficulty in visualizing the distressed wife's lonely existence in a cheerless cavern'.[136] Regardless of this assessment, though, the significance of these lines is that they depict a bleak and desolate place far removed from human settlement, highlighting the Wife's isolation and accounting for inner turmoil.[137] Moreover, *eorðsele* means simply 'earth-hall, earth-dwelling', and only occurs here and twice in *Beowulf* 2410a and 2515a (and a third time by emendation at *Beo* 2232a), where it refers to the dragon's dwelling, which is clearly a barrow. Indeed, Leslie suggests that the Wife lives in a barrow, though the Wife herself be alive.[138] And although some critics have taken lines 33b–4 as evidence that the Wife is dead, there is scant other evidence in the poem to support such a claim, nor are there other examples of (un)dead ethopoeic speakers in Old English poetry, as Lench concedes.[139] However, a deceased person, or rather their corpse, residing in an *eorðhus*, 'earth-house, grave', is addressed in the second person by their soul in *The Grave*, found in the

[134] Cf. the *eorðscrafu* of the dragon in *Beowulf* 3046a, discussed in Chapter 4.
[135] E. Simons, 'Anchor Church Derbyshire: Cave Hermitage or Summerhouse? A Case Study in Understanding a Rock-cut Building', *University of Bristol Spelæological Society Proceedings*, 28 (2021), pp. 347–60.
[136] Wentersdorf, 'The Situation of the Narrator', p. 503.
[137] Jensen, p. 452.
[138] *Three Old English Elegies*, ed. by Leslie, p. 56.
[139] Lench, pp. 18–19. For summaries and rebuttals of this argument, see *Three Old English Elegies*, ed. by Leslie, p. 56; *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, p. 185; and *Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, II, p. 666. See also Thomas D. Hill, '"Leger weardiaþ": *The Wife's Lament* 34b', *ANQ*, 15 (2002), 34–7; Carole Hough, 'The Riddle of *The Wife's Lament* Line 34b', *ANQ*, 16 (2003), 5–8; and Kathryn A. Lowe, '"A Fine and Private Place": *The Wife's Lament*, ll. 33–34, the Translators and the Critics', in *'Lastworda Betst': Essays in Memory of Christine E. Fell with Her Unpublished Writings*, ed. by Carole Hough and Kathryn A. Lowe (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2002), 122–43. If the Wife were dead, one might also expect her subterranean dwelling to be found under a yew tree, not an oak tree, since yews were (and still are) regularly to be found both at pre-Christian burial sites and in Christian churchyards; see Hooke, 'Christianity and the "Sacred Tree"', pp. 228–50, esp. 244–5.

late twelfth-century manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 343, though this is a late text, and one which is indebted to the 'soul and body' tradition, a tradition to which *The Wife's Lament* clearly does not belong.[140]

In addition to the challenging semantics of this passage (*Wif* 27–32a), another striking feature is the considerable amount of verbal and subverbal decoration adorning these lines. Although double alliteration is found throughout the poem, it occurs in five of these six lines, and in the four lines following it. Interlinear vocalic alliteration in lines 28–9 link the words used to describe the Wife's dwelling (*actreo*, *eorðscræf*, *eorðsele*) with the totality (*eal*) of her sense of longing; similarly, interlinear alliteration on *w*- in lines 27 and 32 connects the notion of dwelling (*wunian*) with the place that she inhabits (*wuda*, *wic*), and the fact of its being bereft of joys (*wynna leas*). The joyless state of the Wife's dwelling place—*wic wynna leas*—echoes her own status earlier in the poem as a *wineleas wræcca* (10a), and anticipates the *wynlicran wic*, 'joyful place' (52a), that the Wife envisions for her lover at the poem's conclusion.[141] It is also worth noting here that the Wife is not the only figure in the Old English poetic corpus to inhabit such a place: in *Genesis A*, when God expels Adam from Eden, he tells him that he must *eðel secean, / wynleasran wic, and on wræc hweorfan* […]*, dugeðum bedæled*, 'seek a [new] homeland, a more joyless place, and wander in exile, deprived of benefits' (*Gen A* 927b–30a). If Adam's new homeland is joyless in only relative terms—i.e. in comparison with the ineffable joys of Eden—Grendel's home is described as joyless in absolute terms when he flees *secean wynleas wic*, 'to seek the joyless place' (*Beo* 821a).[142] In this regard, the Wife's new home is rather more like Grendel's than it is Adam's, though, like Adam, she too experiences deprivation and separation from her original community and homeland. Moreover,

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[140] See *Die Fragmente der Reden der Seele an den Leichnam in Zwei Handschriften zu Worcester und Oxford*, ed. by Richard Buchholtz (Erlangen and Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuch, 1890), pp. 11, 18–19, 27.
[141] Short, p. 595.
[142] NB Beowulf later sees a *wynleasne wudu*, 'joyless wood' (*Beo* 1416a), surrounding the mere where Grendel and his mother live.

just as the Wanderer feels constrained by the *waþema gebind* (*Wan* 24b, 57a), in this passage the Wife's emotional state is reflected in her surroundings.[143] Paronomasia in the syllables *wun-/wynn-*, *bear-/bur-* and *bre-*, *eal-/-ele-/eal-*, and *den-/dun-/tun-* further augment the aural patterning of these lines, highlighting in particular the topographical features of the place which they describe, drawing attention to the oppressive character of the place.[144] The Wife then reflects on the situation of other lovers sharing their beds together (33b–4), whilst she must dwell alone, confined to one place: *ic uhtan ana gonge / under actreo geond þas eorðscrafu*, 'before the dawn I walk alone under the oak tree throughout these earth-caves' (35b–6). Once again, the Wife's emotional state is tied to this place, with *ic*, *ana*, *actreo*, and *eorðscræf* sharing in the interlinear vocalic alliteration. It is also in *this* place (*þær*, 37a)—cf. *on þam eorðscræfe* (28b), *þes eorðsele* (29a), etc.—that the Wife sits all day, lamenting, unable to find reprieve from her grief and longing not just for her lord but for human company in general (37–41).[145]

Another parallel with this passage (*Wif* 27–32a), which has been cited by numerous critics, is the engraved image and accompanying runic inscription found on the right-hand panel of the eighth-century Franks Casket.[146] The left-hand side of this panel depicts a half-human, half-bestial figure sitting on a mound face-to-face with a person wearing a helmet and holding a shield and spear; the centre of the panel shows a horse—surrounded by the inscriptions *risci*, 'rush', *bita*, 'biter', and *wudu*, 'wood'—in amongst vegetation, with its head

[143] Martin Green, 'Time, Memory, and Elegy in *The Wife's Lament*', in *The Old English Elegies*, ed. by Green, p. 125; Jensen, p. 452; Lapidge, 'The Comparative Approach', p. 34; *Three Old English Elegies*, ed. by Leslie, pp. 11–12; Riedinger, '"Home"', p. 55; and Wentersdorf, 'The Situation of the Narrator', p. 514.
[144] In *The Phoenix* 24, a similar collocation of words and sounds has the opposite effect by expressing apophatically that such topographical features are *not* present, emphasising the pleasantness of the place: *ne* ***den****e ne dalu ne* ***dun****scrafu*, 'nor valleys nor dales nor mountain-caves'. For further discussion, see Chapter 3.
[145] Neville, p. 87.
[146] Gameson and Gameson, p. 466; Hall, 'The Images and Structure', pp. 2–3; Renoir, 'A Reading Context', p. 232; and Semple, 'A Fear of the Past', p. 122. For images, text and discussion of this panel of the Franks Casket, see *ASPR*, ed. by Dobbie, V, pp. cxxvii–cxxx, 116–18, 205–7; R.I. Page, *An Introduction to English Runes*, 2nd edn (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1999), pp. 177–9; and 'Franks Casket', *Collection: British Museum* (2021) <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_1867-0120-1> [accessed 19 June 2021].

lowered over another mound containing a smaller bent-over figure, also overlooked by a hooded figure carrying some sort of stick or staff; to the right of the panel, three hooded figures stand together with their hands seemingly placed on an object in between them. The inscription, composed in alliterative metre, reads (according to R.I. Page's transliteration and translation): *Her Hos sitiþ on harmberga / agl[.] drigiþ swa hiræ Ertae gisgraf / sarden sorga and sefa torna*, 'Here Hos sits on the sorrow-mound; she suffers distress as Ertae had imposed it upon her, a wretched den (?wood) of sorrows and of torments of mind'.[147] The fact that Hos sits (*sitiþ*) and suffers (*drigiþ*) because of another's actions places Hos in much the same type of situation as the Wife of *The Wife's Lament*. Hos's dwelling *on harmberga*, 'on the sorrow-mound', and in a *sarden*, 'wretched den', possibly located in a wood (if one refers to the paratextual inscription *wudu*), also has much in common with the Wife's physical location in *The Wife's Lament* 27–32a. Although this most mysterious of inscriptions defies straightforward interpretation, the scene which it depicts at least confirms that the suffering of a female exile in *The Wife's Lament* was part of a larger tradition of emplaced exile and suffering in Old English poetry.

Finally, the Wife's thoughts turn to her banished lord and his own journey into exile. Some critics have understood lines 42–7a as generalising gnomic lines referring to a non-specific *geong mon*, 'young person' (42a),[148] whilst others have viewed them, especially lines 45b–7a, as a curse either on a third party (otherwise unattested in the poem) or on the Wife's husband himself.[149] The gnomic quality of these lines (especially 42–5a) is clear, and Klinck

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[147] Page, p. 179.

[148] Fulk in *Eight Old English Poems*, ed. by Pope, p. 123; Gameson and Gameson, pp. 461–2; Larrington, pp. 187–8; William W. Lawrence, 'The Banished Wife's Lament', *MP*, 5 (1907–08), 387–405 (p. 398); and *Three Old English Elegies*, ed. by Leslie, p. 57. *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, p. 51, sees this as a direct reference to the Wife's husband, however.

[149] Christian W.M. Grein, *Dichtungen der Angelsachsen stabreimend übersetzt*, 2 vols (Göttingen: G.H. Wigand, 1857–1863), II (1863), p. 256, n.; *Die altenglische Elegie*, ed. by Sieper, p. 233; Greenfield, '*The Wife's Lament* Reconsidered', esp. p. 907, where he calls it 'the wife's wish (a milder form of curse)'; Klein, 'Gender and the Nature of Exile', p. 128; Lench, pp. 12–13); and, most compellingly, Niles, *Old English Enigmatic Poems*, pp. 149–207, and *God's Exiles*, pp. 132–3. Note that Greenfield, 'The Old English Elegies', pp. 167–8, later revised his interpretation of these lines.

has called this passage ‘a pronouncement, introduced in the gnomic style, on the situation of the husband’.[150] Indeed, the boundary between the lines describing the *geong mon* (42–5a) and those depicting the imagined situation of the Wife’s husband (47b–52a) is perhaps deliberately blurred in a type of construction resembling if not quite reproducing the effect of *apo koinou*, such that whatever is true for the generalised *geong mon* is true for the Wife’s husband, and vice versa, as lines 45b–7a in particular suggest:[151]

Sy æt him sylfum gelong
eal his worulde wyn, sy ful wide fah
feorres folclondes, þæt min freond siteð
under stanhliþe storme behrimed,
wine werigmod, wætre beflowen
on dreorsele,[152] dreogeð se min wine
micle modceare; he gemon to oft
wynlicran wic.

[Whether all his worldly joy
be dependent on himself, whether [he] be an outcast very far away
in a distant country—such that my lover will sit
under a rocky slope covered with frost by a storm,
[my] weary-minded friend, surrounded by water,
in a dismal hall—that friend of mine will suffer
great sadness of heart; he will often remember
the more joyful place.][153] (*Wif* 45b–52a)

The interpretation of these lines hinges on how one understands the co-ordinating *sy* clauses in lines 45b–7a, either as optative or as conditional subjunctives: ‘that it be… that he be…’ or

[150] *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, pp. 185–7, at 186.
[151] *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, p. 187. See Mitchell, *Syntax*, II, §3789–803. For argument in favour of the use of *apo koinou* in OE poetry, see Bruce Mitchell, ‘*apo koinou* in Old English Poetry?’, *NM*, 100 (1999), 477–97; for arguments against, see R.D. Fulk, ‘On Argumentation in Old English Philology, with Particular Reference to the Editing and Dating of *Beowulf*’, *ASE*, 32 (2003), 1–26 (pp. 4–9); and Eric G. Stanley, ‘*Ἀπὸ κοινοῦ*, Chiefly in *Beowulf*’, *Anglo-Saxonica: Festschrift für Hans Schabram zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. by Klaus R. Grinda and Claus-Dieter Wetzel (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1993), pp. 181–207.
[152] For reasons discussed below, the punctuation in this line follows the texts given in *Three Old English Elegies*, ed. by Leslie, p. 48; and Mitchell and Robinson, *Guide to Old English*, p. 275. Other standard editions punctuate either with a full-stop or a semicolon here; see *ASPR*, ed. by Krapp and Dobbie, III, p. 211; *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, p. 94; and *Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, I, p. 330.
[153] Like Niles’s interpretation of these lines, my own tentative rendering is ‘no more than yet one more offering on the smoky altar of this poem’ (Niles, *Old English Enigmatic Poems*, p. 198).

‘if/whether it be… if/whether he be…’. This has given rise in criticism of the poem to what Niles calls a divide between ‘the “genteel” versus the “vindictive” school [of thought]’.[154] According to Mitchell and Robinson, this pair of co-ordinating subjunctives is ‘used correlatively to introduce alternative speculations’ about the husband’s future, not as optatives—i.e. the ‘genteel’ interpretation.[155] If they are understood as optative subjunctives, however, the sentence might well be understood as a ‘vindictive’ curse. Yet as Klinck rightly points out, the Wife subsequently refers to her husband, ‘whom [she] evidently still loves and misses’, with terms of affection, such that a curse seems less likely here: *min freond*, ‘my lover’ (47b), *wine*, ‘friend’ (49a), and *se min wine*, ‘that friend of mine’ (50b).[156] The parallelism between the Wife’s own dire situation and that which she envisages for her husband also seems to make more sense, in my view, in light of such an understanding of the syntax and semantics of this passage.

Such questions notwithstanding, the passage is another highly ornate one, in which double alliteration occurs in six of the eight lines cited here, along with interlinear alliteration once again on *w-* across three lines, and paronomasia in the syllables *wor-/wer-*, *wyn-/win-/win-/wyn-*, *feor-/freo-*, *lond-/freond*, and *dreo-/dreo-*. As with the passage describing the Wife and her dwelling place (27–32a), the alliteration and wordplay in these lines draws attention to the relationship between the place which her husband might inhabit and his emotional state. His ‘worldly joy’ (***wor**ulde* ***wyn***, 46a) is contrasted by alliteration with the space (*ful **wi**de*, 46b) that he would otherwise occupy as an outcast, and by paronomasia with his (hypothetical) negative state of mind as the Wife’s ***win**e* ***wer**igmod*, ‘weary-minded friend’ (49a). Indeed, the

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[154] Niles, *Old English Enigmatic Poems*, p. 161.
[155] Mitchell and Robinson, *Guide to Old English*, p. 275. See also *ASPR*, ed. by Krapp and Dobbie, III, pp. lvii–lix; Fulk in *Eight Old English Poems*, ed. by Pope, pp. 127–8; *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, p. 186; *Three Old English Elegies*, ed. by Leslie, pp. 57–8; and *Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, II, p. 667.
[156] *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, pp. 186–7, at 186; cf. Gameson and Gameson, p. 459. On these terms of endearment, see David Clark, ‘The Semantic Range of *wine* and *freond* in Old English’, *NM*, n.s. 13 (2013), 79–93.

repeated emphasis on *wyn*, 'joy', and *wine*, 'friend', is a striking feature in this passage, underscoring the fact that the Wife's husband is and will be deprived of joy, just as the Wife describes herself as ***win****eleas wræcca*, 'a friendless exile' (10a), who inhabits a *wic* ***wyn****na leas*, 'place deprived of joys' (32a).[157] The double alliteration on *w-* in *wine werigmod wætre beflowen* in line 49 further emphasises the link between the Wife's husband's mental state and the spatial constraints that would be placed on him, surrounded by water, in this imagined situation. A similar use of the sea as a spatial constraint can be seen in line 7a of the poem (*ofer yþa gelac*), as well as in *The Wanderer* 24b and 57a (*ofer waþema gebind*), *The Seafarer* 64a (*ofer holma gelagu*), and *Wulf and Eadwacer* 4–5, in which *Wulf is on iege, ic on oþerre. / Fæst is þæt eglond, fenne biworpen*, 'Wulf is on one island, I on another. That island is secure, surrounded by a fen'.[158] Finally, the husband's hypothetical suffering (*dreogeð*, 50b) is linked to the place of his suffering *on dreorsele*, 'in a dismal hall (or dwelling)' (50a), by the repetition of *dreo-* across the line's caesura. The husband's *dr****eor****-****sele*** also harks back both semantically and sonically to the Wife's ***eorð-sele*** (29a), linking her current circumstances once more with the situation that she envisages for her estranged lord by reference to their respective dwelling places.[159] And just as the Wife sits lamenting, her husband, too, sits *under stanhliþe storme behrimed*, 'under a rocky slope covered with frost by a storm' (48), underscoring the dismal nature of the place where the husband might reside, and drawing on the conventional elegiac association between frost-covered stone and stormy weather (cf. *Ruin* 4–5, *Wan* 76–7, and *Sea* 32–3a). The extensive ornamentation in this passage is not only aurally impressive, but serves to reinforce the link between the envisioned sorrow of the Wife's husband and the place where he might experience this emotion, as well as the link between the husband's imagined place of

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[157] On the use of repetition in the poem more generally, see Stevick, 'Formal Aspects of *The Wife's Lament*'.
[158] *Old English Elegies*, ed. by Klinck, p. 228. Note that, in *Wulf and Eadwacer*, although the female speaker and Wulf are separated by water, specifically by a fen, there is nothing to suggest that the poem's speaker has been exiled as the Wife of *The Wife's Lament* has been.
[159] Short, p. 595. For an alternative understanding of *dreorsele*, see Karl P. Wentersdorf, 'The Situation of the Narrator's Lord in *The Wife's Lament*', *NM*, 71 (1970), 604–10 (pp. 606–7).

suffering and the Wife's actual place of exile. The topographical features of the Wife's dwelling, like those of her husband's, should be understood, as Fulk elegantly puts it, 'as objects conveying affective resonance […], outwardly reifying an inward state of desolation'.[160] Despite numerous interpretative difficulties, place and personhood are in these ways deftly woven together throughout *The Wife's Lament*. The external topography of the Wife's place of exile mirrors her internal emotional landscape. However, the Wife's dreary surroundings do not hinder her capacity for imagination: indeed, she envisages a similarly oppressive location for her estranged husband, such that he, like her, *gemon to oft wynlicran wic*, 'will often remember the more joyful place' (51b–2a). That more joyful place, of course, is the hall or homestead where they previously had their *heord* together, but which they have no longer, as the poem's open-ended final lines make painfully clear: *Wa bið þam þe sceal / of langoþe leofes abidan*, 'Woe be to the one who must await a beloved with longing' (52b–3).

Conclusion

As in Chapter 1, so too has the analysis in this chapter demonstrated the fleetingness of place, albeit if only over the course of a single human lifetime. Following the loss of his lord and company in the hall, the Wanderer finds himself *eðle bedæled / freomægum feor*, 'deprived of his homeland, far from noble kinsmen', forced to roam the *wræclastas*, 'exile-paths', out at sea. And whilst the Seafarer too puts out to sea, his is a voluntary exile from human society, one which he hopes will bring him closer to the heavenly community of God and his angels. The vast space of the sea conveys something of the Wanderer's sense of loss, yet it affords a certain degree of freedom to the Seafarer in his quest for *dream mid dugeþum*, 'joy amongst the (heavenly) retainers', and *dryhtnes dreamas*, 'the joys of the lord'. Nevertheless, both of

[160] Fulk in *Eight Old English Poems*, ed. by Pope, p. 122.

these poems ultimately offer a pseudo-homiletic consolation for the transience of this earthly life in their evocation of the heavenly community that awaits *þam þe are seceð*, 'the one who seeks (God's) mercy' (*Wan* 114b). Human social space and community can be exchanged for communion with God in the heavenly home. However, *The Wife's Lament* offers no such consolation, as the poem's gloomy gnomic conclusion drives home. Where actively seeking God's mercy may be rewarded with eternal life in Heaven, passively awaiting a beloved on earth affords one only suffering. True to the gnome in *Maxims I* 37, the Wife is wretched in her separation from her homeland and isolation from her friends and kinsmen. Her estrangement from her beloved lord is conveyed in spatial terms, accentuating the physical distance between them, and her inner emotional life is conveyed through the striking description of the place in which she has been ordered to live. In each of these poems, crucially, exile is construed through the language of place. The next chapter shall explore how, in *Guthlac A* and *Andreas*, Guthlac and Andrew must head out into unmarked space in order to convert demonic and heathen sites, respectively, into holy places fit for their own or their converts' communion with God.

Chapter 3
Converting Places in Verse Saints' Lives

> Beorh sceal on eorþan
> grene standan
> 'A hill must stand
> green on the earth'
> — *Max II* 34b–5a
>
> Ceastra beoð feorran gesyne,
> orðanc enta geweorc
> 'Cities are seen from afar,
> the ingenious work of giants'
> — *Max II* 1b–2a

In the previous chapter, the experience of exile as presented in Old English poetry was shown to be a fundamentally spatial one: but where the Wanderer's and the Seafarer's traversal of the space of the sea affords them a degree of freedom, the Wife's confinement to a remote and desolate place only highlights further her exclusion from human society. The hall—especially in *The Wanderer*, albeit subtly in *The Seafarer* and only tacitly in *The Wife's Lament*—is still an important metonym for human society. Both the hall and human society within are presented as being transient even over the course of a single human lifespan: to lose one's community is to lose one's place in this world. However, both *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* point, in their conclusions, to the eternal heavenly community that awaits whoever seeks God's mercy, whilst *The Wife's Lament* depicts the isolation of being in a far-removed place as a fundamentally hopeless experience for the one who lives in exile. In marked contrast to this experience of exile, the two principal poems discussed in this chapter, *Guthlac A* and *Andreas*, demonstrate that place can be something which is deliberately sought out far from human community for the higher purposes of communion with God or of converting people to his law. In *Guthlac A*, much like the Seafarer, Guthlac leaves the communal monastic life behind in search of the

solitary eremitic life, abandoning community for solitude. Before he can undertake such a life, though, he must expel the demonic inhabitants of a *beorg*—'hill', or 'barrow' according to some—which he then converts into a holy place. In a similar fashion, in *Andreas*, Andrew travels across the Mediterranean to free Matthew from imprisonment in the city of Mermedonia, whose cannibalistic citizens he overcomes and converts to Christianity. Common to both of these saints' lives is the conversion of a demonic or heathen place into a holy, Christian one. However, they differ considerably in their presentation of place: in many regards, Guthlac's dwelling in his hermitage resembles, at least superficially, the emplaced experience of the Wife in *The Wife's Lament*, whilst Andrew's purging of a heathen place and its cannibalistic inhabitants is reminiscent of Beowulf's cleansing of the mere of Grendel and his mother.[1] Significantly, though, central to the depiction of sainthood in both of these texts is the interaction between the saintly protagonists and places that they convert and occupy.

Place and the hagiographical tradition

Anglo-Saxon England had a rich tradition of hagiographical writing in both Latin and Old English, by both anonymous and named authors, most notably by Ælfric around the end of the tenth century.[2] Although these texts are often simply referred to as 'saints' lives', as indeed they are in this discussion, there are strictly two principal forms which a narrative about a

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[1] Stanley B. Greenfield and Daniel G. Calder, with Michael Lapidge, *A New Critical History of Old English Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), p. 159. The textual relationship between *Andreas* and *Beowulf* is considered briefly below.

[2] For general overviews, see Michael Lapidge, 'The Saintly Life in Anglo-Saxon England', in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. by Godden and Lapidge, pp. 251–72; and Claire Watson, 'Old English Hagiography: Recent and Future Research', *Literature Compass*, 1 (2004), 1–14. For more detailed overviews of both the Latin and the vernacular traditions, see Michael Lapidge and Rosalind C. Love, 'The Latin Hagiography of England and Wales (600–1500)', in *Hagiographies: Histoire internationale de la littérature hagiographique latine et vernaculaire en Occident des origines à 1550*, ed. by Guy Philippart and others, 8 vols (Turnhout: Brepols, 1994–2020), III, ed. by Philippart (2001), pp. 203–325, esp. 203–23; James E. Cross, 'English Vernacular Saints' Lives before 1000 A.D.', in *Hagiographies: Histoire internationale*, II, ed. by Guy Philippart (1996), pp. 413–427; and E. Gordon Whatley, 'Late Old English Hagiography, c. 950–1150', in *Hagiographies: Histoire internationale*, II, ed. by Philippart, pp. 429–99.

saint's life could take: the *passio* in the case of martyrs and the *vita* in the case of confessors.[3] The *sanctorale*—the immovable half of the liturgical calendar concerned chiefly with the saints—necessitated the composition of readings about the saints in order to be able to venerate them on their feast days.[4] The saintly narratives found in Ælfric's two series of *Catholic Homilies* and *Lives of Saints* conformed closely to existing models of Latin saints' lives and were produced for the edification of laity and clergy alike. However, the poetical renderings of saints' lives discussed in this chapter were probably intended for private reading (*meditatio*), or possibly, in the case of *Guthlac A*, as a didactic piece for the instruction of younger monks who, like Guthlac, may have exchanged the martial for the monastic life.[5] As Michael Lapidge has noted, though, the only vernacular poem which can rightly be called a saint's life—in the sense of a conventional *vita*—is *Juliana*, whilst *Andreas*, conversely, 'is precisely the sort of text which would have been rejected by Ælfric as heretical'.[6] It is interesting to note that the poetic renderings rooted more firmly in the hagiographical tradition and in keeping with orthodox belief—namely, *Juliana*, *Elene*, and *The Fates of the Apostles*—were all composed

[3] For definitions of these terms, see Lapidge, 'The Saintly Life', pp. 260–1. Other classes of saint treated in *vitae* and *passiones* include patriarchs, apostles and virgins.

[4] On the vernacular *sanctorale*, see Mechthild Gretsch, *Ælfric and the Cult of Saints in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, CSASE, 34 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 1–20; and Michael Lapidge, 'Ælfric's Sanctorale', in *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and their Contexts*, ed. by Paul E. Szarmach (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 115–29.

[5] Daniel G. Calder, '*Guthlac A* and *Guthlac B*: Some Discriminations', in *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Essays in Appreciation for John C. McGalliard*, ed. by Lewis E. Nicholson and Dolores W. Frese (Notre Dame, IN: University of Dame Press, 1975), p. 66; Lapidge, 'The Saintly Life', pp. 267–8; and *The Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book*, ed. by Jane Roberts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 29. For an overview of these vernacular verse saints' lives, see Greenfield and Calder, *A New Critical History*, pp. 158–82. Ælfric's three main series of homilies are edited in *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series*, ed. by Peter Clemoes, EETS, s.s. 17 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series*, ed. by Malcolm Godden, EETS, s.s. 5 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); and Ælfric, *Old English Lives of Saints*, ed. and trans. by Mary Clayton and Juliet Mullins, 3 vols, DOML, 58–60 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019).

[6] Lapidge, 'The Saintly Life', p. 268. On Ælfric's position on heresy (*gedwyld*) in vernacular saints' lives, see Scott DeGregorio, 'Ælfric, *Gedwyld*, and Vernacular Hagiography: Sanctity and Spirituality in the Old English Lives of SS Peter and Paul', in *Ælfric's Lives of Canonised Popes*, ed. by Donald Scragg, Old English Newsletter: Subsidia, 30 (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), pp. 75–98. For discussion of Ælfric's own treatment of Saint Andrew in *CH* I.38, see Frederick M. Biggs, 'Ælfric's Andrew and the Apocrypha', *JEGP*, 104, 4 (2005), 473–94.

by Cynewulf, who follows his Latin sources more or less closely.[7] However, more typically for Old English poetry, the authors of *Guthlac A* and *Andreas* are both anonymous, and the relationship between these poems and their putative Latin sources, if any in the case of *Guthlac A*, is not clear.[8] The sustained treatments in verse of a native English saint in *Guthlac A* (818 lines long)—unique in Old English poetry—and of an apocryphal saint's life in *Andreas* (1,722 lines) merit close inspection, as the considerable body of critical literature devoted to these poems attests.[9] Though the *beorg* in *Guthlac A* and the city of Mermedonia in *Andreas* have been addressed repeatedly and at length in scholarly discussions of these poems, few critics have considered the significance of either of these places *qua* place.

Although *Guthlac A* and *Andreas* betray a clear interest in the places occupied by these poems' saintly protagonists, notions of space and place are also evident, albeit at times only fleetingly, in many texts in the Anglo-Saxon prose hagiographic tradition. For instance, Book 3 of the anonymous *Vita sancti Cuthberti*, composed between 699 and 705, describes in some detail Cuthbert's establishment of a hermitage on the island of Inner Farne, previously inhabited by devils, where he cuts out holes in the earth in which to dwell—*domunculas, de quibus nisi sursum coelum uidere nihil potuit*, 'little dwelling-places from which he could see nothing except the heavens above'; he then has former brethren sink a well into one of these,

[7] Lapidge, 'The Saintly Life', pp. 267–8; Jane Roberts, 'Cynewulf', in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and others, 2nd edn (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), pp. 136–7; and Sisam, *Studies in the History*, pp. 7–8. For an assessment of Cynewulf's Latinity and learned vernacular adaptations, see Janie Steen, *Verse and Virtuosity: The Adaptation of Latin Rhetoric in Old English Poetry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), pp. 110–38. On Cynewulf's identity and penmanship of these three poems, see Earl R. Anderson, *Cynewulf: Structure, Style, and Theme in His Poetry* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983), pp. 15–27, 68–125; and R.D. Fulk, 'Cynewulf: Canon, Dialect, and Date', in *The Cynewulf Reader*, ed. by Robert E. Bjork (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 3–22.
[8] On which, see esp. Stephanie Clark, '*Guthlac A* and the Temptation of the Barrow', *SN*, 87, 1 (2015), 48–72 (pp. 60–9); Jane Roberts, '*Guthlac A*: Sources and Source Hunting', in *Medieval English Studies Presented to George Kane*, ed. by Edward Donald Kennedy, Ronald Waldron, and Joseph S. Wittig (Cambridge: Brewer, 1988), pp. 1–18; and *Andreas*, ed. by North and Bintley, pp. 1–8.
[9] Recent overviews of various scholarly approaches to these poems can be found in Clark, 'Temptation of the Barrow', pp. 48–72; and *Andreas*, ed. by North and Bintley, pp. 1–114. For discussion of the unique depiction of a native saint in verse, see Stefany Wragg, '*Guthlac A* and the Cult of Guthlac', in *Guthlac: Crowland's Saint*, ed. by Jane Roberts and Alan Thacker (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2020), pp. 214–28.

and has them bring drift wood as a building material.[10] Books 17–24 (especially 17) of Bede's early eighth-century prose *Vita* expand on the account in the anonymous *Vita*, emphasising Cuthbert's establishment of his solitary island dwelling; the *Historia ecclesiastica* IV.28 likewise relates Cuthbert's life as an ascetic.[11] Moreover, Books 24–8 of Felix's slightly later *Vita sancti Guthlaci*, which draws extensively on Bede's *Vita sancti Cuthberti*, describe Guthlac's seeking out and establishment of his own hermitage in the fens around Crowland.[12] These narratives of 'native' eremitic Anglo-Saxon saints made use of the tradition of the Desert Fathers, Saints Paul (d. c. 345) and especially Anthony (c. 251–c. 356), whose lives were known from Jerome's *Vita sancti Pauli* and the translation of Athanasius's Greek *Life of St Anthony* by Evagrius.[13] These saints' solitary dwelling places in the desert are described in the *Old English Martyrology* and Aldhelm's *De virginitate* 28, and their breaking of bread together in the desert is depicted on the north face of the Ruthwell Cross, the left-hand inscription of which probably read, before it was damaged, *fregerunt panem in deserto*, 'they broke bread in the desert'.[14] Evidently, narratives about these eremitic saints of the desert were well known to Anglo-Saxon cenobitic communities.

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[10] *Two Lives of St Cuthbert: A Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's Prose Life*, ed. by Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), pp. 94–107, at 96–7 (for details about Cuthbert's dwelling and its analogues, see p. 326); and Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 434–9. The divergent aims of these three accounts, and their relation to Cuthbert's dwelling place on Farne, are discussed most recently in Christiania Whitehead, *The Afterlife of St Cuthbert: Place, Texts and Ascetic Tradition, 690–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 12–33.

[11] *Two Lives of St Cuthbert*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave, pp. 214–39, esp. 214–17. For a discussion of the dates, origins and authorship of these texts, see pp. 11–16.

[12] *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave, pp. 16, 86–95.

[13] Stephanie Clark, 'A More Permanent Homeland: Land Tenure in *Guthlac A*', *ASE*, 40 (2012), 75–102 (pp. 76–9); *Two Lives of St Cuthbert*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave, pp. 11–13; *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave, pp. 16–17; Roberts, 'Sources and Source Hunting', pp. 10–11. On the parallels between Felix's *Vita* and these earlier *Lives*, see Sarah Downey, 'Intertextuality in the Lives of St. Guthlac' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Toronto, 2004), pp. 25–66; Benjamin Kurtz, 'From St. Anthony to St. Guthlac: A Study in Biography', *University of California Publications in Modern Philology*, 12 (1926), 103–46; and Ryan Lawrence, 'Experiencing the Desert in Early Medieval England', *Philological Quarterly*, 99 (2020), 337–55 (pp. 341–7).

[14] For texts, see *The Old English Martyrology: Edition, Translation and Commentary*, ed. and trans. by Christine Rauer, Anglo-Saxon Texts, 10 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2013), pp. 46–7, 50–1; Aldhelm, *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. by Rudolf Ehwald, 2 vols, MHG (Berlin: Weidmann, 1913–1919), I (1913), pp. 264–5, and *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, trans. by Lapidge and Herren, pp. 87–8; David Howlett, 'Inscriptions and Design of the Ruthwell Cross', in *The Ruthwell Cross: Papers from the Colloquium Sponsored by the Index of Christian Art, Princeton University, 8 December 1989*, ed. by Brendan Cassidy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press,

Other lives concerned those saints, especially the apostles, who travelled to distant lands in order to convert their inhabitants to Christianity. To take one example, narratives about St Bartholomew were evidently widely read, or heard, in Anglo-Saxon England, since his feast day is cited in the *Menologium* 153b–6a, and both *Fates of the Apostles* 42–9 and the *Old English Martyrology* describe Bartholomew's apostolic mission to India. In his *Catholic Homilies* I.31 (*Passio sancti Bartholomei*), Ælfric provides a more detailed account of both the geography of India and Bartholomew's conversion of its inhabitants through the hallowing of one of their pagan temples.[15] This paradigmatic account of a saint travelling to a distant land in order to convert its inhabitants through the conversion of place finds a reflex in, amongst numerous other texts, the account offered in *Andreas*. And although the narrative in the now fragmentary Old English *Life of Saint Christopher* no longer contains such details (if, indeed, it ever did), the *Old English Martyrology* describes how Christopher's body was translated by a certain Bishop Petrus and placed in a lake to prevent it from flooding the nearby city; in this way, place and sanctity are bound closely together.[16] There are countless more examples in both the Latin and the vernacular corpora of hagiographic narratives which attach particular saints to particular places or regions—in what Michelet terms 'a vast imaginary geography'—but it is curious that the verse accounts in Cynewulf's *Juliana* and *Elene* appear to be rather less concerned with the places in which these saints' lives play out.[17] Indeed, in *Juliana* Cynewulf describes Nicomedia, the place of Juliana's martyrdom, in only the most allusive terms (*Jul* 19b–22a), whilst in *Elene* he describes events which happen in particular places without ever describing those places in detail, for instance the Hunnish attack on Rome (*Ele*

1992), pp. 75, 78–9. For discussion, see Lawrence, 'Experiencing the Desert', pp. 347–9; Paul Meyvaert, 'A New Perspective on the Ruthwell Cross: *Ecclesia* and *Vita Monastica*', in *The Ruthwell Cross*, ed. by Cassidy, pp. 131–5; and Éamonn Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood: Liturgical Images and the Old English Poems of the Dream of the Rood Tradition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), pp. 153–60.

[15] *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series*, ed. by Clemoes, pp. 439–50.

[16] *Old English Martyrology*, ed. and trans. by Rauer, p. 90. For the texts of the vernacular prose *Life of St Christopher* and the Latin *Vita* on which it is based, see *Three Old English Prose Texts*, ed. by Rypins, pp. 68–76, 108–10.

[17] Michelet, *Creation, Migration, and Conquest*, p. 164.

18b–68, 105–43), Elene's arrival in Jerusalem (266–75), and the journey to Calvary and the finding of the true cross (709–858, etc.).[18]

In terms of space and place, then, both *Guthlac A* and *Andreas* have much more in common with the prose examples cited above—and other non-hagiographical texts in the Old English poetic corpus—than they do with either *Juliana* or *Elene*. Perhaps the 'heroic' framing of Guthlac's and Andrew's exploits in terms of the *topos* of the *miles Christi* and their apparent divergence from, or even lack of dependence on, Latin antecedents resulted in the assimilation of these saints' lives more easily into the Old English heroic idiom, allowing the poem's authors to engage more thoroughly with the spaces and places encountered by these saints.[19] Although Cynewulf drew on formulaic Old English battle imagery, especially the 'beasts of battle' motif, when describing the Huns' attack on Rome in *Elene*,[20] the poet responsible for *Andreas* exploited numerous Old English poetic motifs and 'traditional diction' as well as, in particular, the text—or *a* text—of *Beowulf* in his account of Andrew's journey to and exploits in Mermedonia, thereby recasting the narrative of St Andrew in more conventionally heroic terms.[21] The account of Guthlac's exploits in *Guthlac A* are likewise indebted to older narratives about saintly hermits, as well as to other Old English poetic conventions. Where the

[18] On some of the subtler spatial aspects of these and similar examples in *Elene*, *Juliana*, and other verse saints' lives, however, see Michelet, *Creation, Migration, and Conquest*, pp. 163–97.

[19] For discussion of Guthlac and Andrew as *milites Christi*, see Christian D. Aggeler, 'Reinventing the Holy Man: The Medieval English Guthlac Cycle and Its Contexts' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2001), pp. 144–70; Joyce Hill, 'The Soldier of Christ in Old English Prose and Poetry', *LSE*, n.s. 12 (1981), 57–80; and, most recently, Glen Cahilly-Bretzin, 'Soldiering for Christ: The Role of the *Miles Christi* in Four Old English Saints' *Lives*' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2020), pp. 86–183. Note that Guthlac is referred to as Christ's *cempa*, 'champion', twelve times in lines 153a, 180b, 324b, 402a, 438b, 513b, 558b, 576a, 643b, 688b, 727b, and 797a; and as *oretta*, 'warrior', four times in lines 176a, 344a, 401a, and 569b.

[20] See Donald K. Fry, 'Themes and Type-Scenes in *Elene* 1–113', *Speculum*, 44, 1 (1969), 35–45; and Mark S. Griffith, 'Convention and Originality in the Old English "Beasts of Battle" Typescene', *ASE*, 22 (1993), 179–99.

[21] Andy Orchard, 'The Originality of *Andreas*', in *Old English Philology: Studies in Honour of R.D. Fulk*, ed. by Leonard Neidorf, Rafael J. Pascual, and Tom Shippey (Cambridge: Brewer, 2016), pp. 331–2. For discussions of the *Andreas*-poet's rehabilitation of his subject according to the conventions of the Old English poetic tradition, see Lester L. Faigley, '*Andreas* and Old English Poetic Style' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Washington, 1976); and Ivan Herbison, 'Generic Adaptation in *Andreas*', in *Essays on Anglo-Saxon and Related Themes in Memory of Lynne Grundy*, ed. by Jane Roberts and Janet Nelson (London: King's College Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 2000), pp. 181–211. The poem's use of *Beowulf* is discussed below.

last chapter concluded with an analysis of the Wife's solitary dwelling in *The Wife's Lament*, the following discussion begins with, to reprise Tally's phrase, a 'spatially oriented reading' of Guthlac's establishment of his secluded holy place in *Guthlac A*. From the hallowing of Guthlac's isolated hermitage in *Guthlac A*, the discussion then turns to Andrew's conversion of the cannibalistic heathens of Mermedonia as depicted in *Andreas*. The contrast between Guthlac's spiritual struggle against demons and Andrew's feat of conquest and conversion is reflected in the different ways in which space and, in particular, place are presented in each of these poems.

Eremitic space in Guthlac A

The textual tradition of the life of St Guthlac spans some three centuries in Anglo-Saxon England and demonstrates the enduring popularity of the saint's life, which extended even into the fifteenth century.[22] This tradition begins with the *Vita sancti Guthlaci*, by the otherwise unknown Felix, composed not long after Guthlac's death in 714 and dating to between c. 730 and c. 740.[23] A concise entry preserving some basic details of the account found in Felix's *Vita* appears in the *Old English Martyrology*, which was already in circulation by c. 900 and was quite possibly translated from a Latin original composed by Acca of Hexham in c. 731–c. 740.[24] Similarly, Guthlac's death is recorded under the entry for 714 in the so-called 'Common Stock' of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (i.e. that section of the *Chronicle* written up until the entry for 892), the earliest copy of which survives in the late-ninth-century Cambridge, Corpus Christi

[22] See *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave, pp. 19–25; Aggeler, 'Reinventing the Holy Man'; and Jane Roberts and Alan Thacker, 'Introduction to Guthlac's Life and Cult', in *Guthlac: Crowland's Saint*, ed. Roberts and Thacker, pp. xiv–xlvi.
[23] *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave, pp. 15–19.
[24] Michael Lapidge, 'Acca of Hexham and the Origin of the *Old English Martyrology*', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 123 (2005), 29–78, and *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 46–8, 233–4; and *Old English Martyrology*, ed. and trans. by Rauer, pp. 2–3, 80–1, and 'The Sources of the Old English *Martyrology*', *ASE*, 32 (2003), 89–109.

College, MS 173.[25] The Old English prose *Life of St Guthlac*, a fairly close rendering of Felix's *Vita*, survives in London, British Library, MS Cotton Vespasian D.xxi, which dates to the second half of the eleventh century; despite the late date of the manuscript, Jane Roberts posits that it was possibly translated in the late ninth century.[26] Additionally, at the end of the tenth-century Vercelli Book (Biblioteca Capitolare di Vercelli, MS CXVII), *Vercelli Homily* 23 reproduces chapters 28–32 of Felix's *Vita*, which detail Guthlac's temptation and rescue from Hell by Bartholomew, 'with great faithfulness'.[27] Finally, the poems *Guthlac A* and *Guthlac B* appear consecutively on fols. 32v to 52v of the tenth-century Exeter Book, and whilst one cannot posit an accurate date for the composition of these poems, Jane Roberts suggests rather vaguely 'an earlier rather than later time of composition', whilst Sarah Downey and others argue, in the case of *Guthlac A*, for a later date contemporaneous with the sole surviving copy in the Exeter Book.[28] The source for *Guthlac B* has been identified as chapter 50 of Felix's *Vita*, which is concerned primarily with Guthlac's death; however, Roberts describes *Guthlac A* as 'anomalous' amongst the Guthlac material in Old English, concluding that there is 'no obvious single source' for the poem.[29] Although it is of course possible that the *Guthlac A* poet was at least aware of Felix's *Vita*, Stephanie Clark has concluded 'we can confidently state that

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[25] M.B. Parkes, 'The Palaeography of the Parker Manuscript of the *Chronicle*, Laws and Sedulius, and Historiography at Winchester in the Late Ninth and Tenth Centuries', *ASE*, 5 (1976), 149–71 (pp. 150–4); *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, III: *MS A*, ed. by Bately, p. 33.

[26] Jane Crawford [Roberts], 'Guthlac: An Edition of the Old English Prose Life Together with the Poems in the Exeter Book' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 1967), p. 48. See also Jane Roberts, 'The Old English Prose Translation of Felix's *Vita sancti Guthlaci*', in *Studies in Earlier Old English Prose: Sixteen Original Contributions*, ed. by Paul E. Szarmach (Albany, NY: State University Press of New York, 1986), pp. 363–79.

[27] *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts*, ed. by Donald G. Scragg, EETS, o.s. 300 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 381. On Guthlac's temptations, see Niles, *God's Exiles*, pp. 194–6; Charles D. Wright, 'The Three Temptations and the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit in *Guthlac A*, 160b–169', *Traditio*, 38 (1982), 341–3.

[28] *The Guthlac Poems*, ed. by Roberts, pp. 41–42; cf. Roy M. Liuzza, 'The Old English Christ and Guthlac Texts, Manuscripts, and Critics', *RES*, n.s. 41, 161 (1990), 1–11; but see, in contrast, Sarah Downey and others, '"Books Tell Us": Lexomic and Traditional Evidence for the Sources of *Guthlac A*', *MP*, 110 (2012), 153–81; cf. Patrick W. Conner, 'Sources Studies, The Old English *Guthlac A* and the English Benedictine Reformation', *Revue Bénédictine*, 103 (1993), 380–413 (p. 383); and Christopher Jones, 'Envisioning the *cenobium* in the Old English *Guthlac A*', *Mediaeval Studies*, 57 (1995), 259–91 (p. 289).

[29] *The Guthlac Poems*, ed. by Roberts, pp. 19–29, 36–43, and 'Sources and Source Hunting', pp. 1, 15.

he did not use it'.[30] Nonetheless, as Clark has also noted, '[R]eadings of *Guthlac A* have become entangled with Felix's *Vita* in a problematic way, as one text is used to fill in perceived gaps in the other'.[31] This fact is arguably most apparent in the insistence throughout the critical discussion of *Guthlac A* that Guthlac lives in a fen: whilst in Felix's *Vita* 24 Guthlac is said to live in Crowland's *aterrima palus*, 'most dismal fen', at no point in *Guthlac A*, or *Guthlac B* for that matter, does the word *fen* or a synonym for it occur.[32] Indeed, it is interesting to note that if the poet responsible for *Guthlac A* was aware of Felix's *Vita*, he deliberately avoided referring to the topography characteristic of Crowland and Lincolnshire more generally, and chose instead to refer to this space as *westen*, 'wilderness, desert' (81b, 208b, 296a), and *anad*, 'solitude, desert' (333b, 356b).[33] Whether this 'rigorously departicularized' setting betrays a lack of knowledge of the topography of Crowland or merely a lack of interest in it is secondary to the fact that by locating Guthlac in the *westen*, the composer of *Guthlac A* clearly situated the saint in the same eremitic tradition as the Desert Fathers, Paul and Anthony, just as the authors of the *Vitae sancti Cuthberti* and the *Vita sancti Guthlaci* had done.[34]

The *Old English Martyrology* states that Paul and Anthony respectively *on þæt westen gewat* and *gewat on westen*, 'departed into the desert', and that Anthony dwelt *on ðæm ytemestan ænde eorðan ymbhwyrftes on Egypta westene*, 'at the outmost end of the circle of

[30] Clark, 'The Temptation of the Barrow', pp. 50, 60–9; *The Guthlac Poems*, ed. by Roberts, pp. 19–29, and 'Sources and Source Hunting'.
[31] Clark, 'The Temptation of the Barrow', p. 50.
[32] *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave, pp. 86–7; Magennis, *Images of Community*, p. 181.
[33] For discussions of the medieval East Anglian fens, in which Crowland is located, see Richard Hoggett, 'The Early Christian Landscape of East Anglia', in *Landscape Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Nicholas J. Higham and Martin J. Ryan (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), pp. 193–210; Rackham, *History of the Countryside*, pp. 374–94; Tom Williamson, *Shaping Medieval Landscapes: Settlement, Society, Environment* (Macclesfield: Windgather, 2003), pp. 114–18; and, specifically as represented in Felix's *Vita*, Britton Elliott Brooks, 'Felix's Construction of the English Fenlands: Landscape, Authorizing Allusion, and Lexical Echo', in *Guthlac: Crowland's Saint*, ed. by Roberts and Thacker, pp. 55–71, and *Restoring Creation: The Natural World in the Anglo-Saxon Saints' Lives of Cuthbert and Guthlac*, Nature and the Environment in the Middle Ages, 3 (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2019), pp. 173–228; and Kelly Kilpatrick, 'Places, Landscapes and Borders in the *Vita S. Guthlaci*', in *Guthlac: Crowland's Saint*, ed. by Roberts and Thacker, pp. 97–115.
[34] Clark, 'The Temptation of the Barrow', p. 51; *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave, p. 182; Magennis, *Images of Community*, pp. 181–7; and *The Guthlac Poems*, ed. by Roberts, p. 21, and 'Sources and Source Hunting', p. 11.

the earth in the Egyptian desert'.[35] To live in the desert is to be separated in space from human society, a fact which is emphasised in particular in the *Martyrology*'s entry for Anthony. The desert is, of course, significant throughout the Bible: for example, it is where the Israelites endure exile after fleeing Egypt in Exodus 13–19, and it is the place of Christ's temptation by Satan in Mark 1:12–13. It is hardly surprising, then, that the word *westen* occurs no fewer than 44 times in the Old English poetic corpus, often in reference to biblical narratives: for instance, in *Beowulf*, Grendel's forebear, Cain, *westen warode*, 'occupied the desert' (*Beo* 1265a); *Exodus* refers to the *westen* three times (*Exo* 8a, 117b, 123a); and in *Andreas*, Andrew recounts how Christ revealed himself to be king over the world *on þam westenne*, 'in that desert' (*And* 699b).[36] The word is found throughout the corpus of eremitic narratives, and in the Guthlac tradition, the word occurs 22 times in the Old English prose *Life of St Guthlac* and a further seven in *Vercelli Homily* 23, where it translates Felix's *heremus* and *solitudo*, 'desert', as it does in Ælfric's *Glossary*: e.g. *desertum* [*oððe*] *heremus westen*.[37] In his seventh-century *Etymologiae* XIV.8, Isidore of Seville defined deserts thus: *Deserta vocata quia non seruntur et ideo quasi deserentur; ut sunt loca silvarum et montium, contraria uberrimarum terrarium, quae sunt uberrimae glebae*, 'Deserts are so-called because they are not sown and therefore it is as though they are abandoned; as are wooded and mountainous places, [which are] the opposite of fertile lands which have the most fertile soil'.[38] Evidently *desertum* not only designated the type of sun-scorched, sand-covered desert inhabited by St Anthony—as we might tend to understand the word 'desert' today—but also referred to any uninhabited and uncultivated land, as Isidore's tautologous 'etymology' makes clear (*desertum*, cf. *desero*, 'I

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[35] *Old English Martyrology*, ed. and trans. by Rauer, pp. 46, 50.
[36] *DOEC*, s.v. *westen*. On the root *west-* in OE, see Ruth L. Harris, 'The Meanings of *Waste* in Old and Middle English' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Washington, 1989), pp. 27–72.
[37] Harris, 'The Meanings of *Waste*', pp. 74–7; Roberts, 'Guthlac: An Edition', p 656; *The Vercelli Homilies*, ed. by Scragg, p. 473; and Ælfric, *Ælfrics Grammatik und Glossar*, ed. by Julius Zupitza, rev. by Helmut Gneuss, 3rd edn (Hildesheim: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2001), p. 312.
[38] Isidore, *Etymologiarvm sive originvm*, ed. by Lindsay, II, XIV.viii.31.

desert, forsake, abandon'). This lack of cultivation and the association with remote wooded and mountainous lands beyond the bounds of human settlement makes the *desertum*, and likewise the Old English *westen*, the ideal location for a saint to seek out an isolated dwelling place in which to establish his hermitage.[39]

This fact is acknowledged explicitly in the so-called 'second prologue' of *Guthlac A*: *Sume þa wuniað on westennum, / secað ond gesittað sylfra willum / hamas on heolstrum*, 'Some dwell there in the desert, seek out and occupy homes in hiding of their own volition' (*Guth A* 81–3a).[40] The 'some' in question are hermits, subsequently referred to as *anbuendra*, 'lone-dwellers' (88a), whose numbers, the poem then relates, Guthlac joins. The desert, however, is not only home to would-be saints, but also to demons: in Ælfric's *CH* I.31 (*Passio sancti Bartholomei*), for instance, the titular saint orders a devil *to westene gewitan*, 'to depart to the desert'.[41] Similarly in *Guthlac A*, the vast space of the desert is not only the domain of demons, but is also associated with places of exile through double alliteration on *w-*: *Wid is þes westen, wræcsetla fela, / eardas onhæle earmra gæsta*, 'This desert is vast, many exile-places, secret dwellings of wretched spirits' (296–7).[42] Where in Chapter 2 *wræc*, 'exile, misery', and *earmþu*, 'misery, wretchedness', were seen to belong to the conventional language of the elegies, here they apply to the physical and spiritual exile experienced by demons after the fall of the rebel angels.[43] Although hermits might be 'lone-dwellers', their self-imposed exile is

[39] Clark, 'Temptation of the Barrow', p. 56.
[40] On the question of where precisely in the Exeter Book *Guthlac A* begins, see Liuzza, 'The Old English Christ and Guthlac', pp. 1–11, at 9; and Laurence K. Shook, 'The Prologue of the Old-English *Guthlac A*', *Mediaeval Studies*, 23 (1961), 294–304.
[41] *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series*, ed. by Clemoes, p. 445.
[42] 'Vast' is a fitting way in which to translate *wid* here since both 'vast' and *westen* share the same etymon: 'vast' < L. *vāstus*, 'empty, unoccupied, waste, deserted' < PIt **wāsto*, cf. OE *wēsten* < adj. *wēste*, 'empty, waste, deserted' < PGmc **wōstaz*, both of which ultimately descend from PIE $*h_1weh_2$-, 'to leave, to abandon'. See Orel, p. 470 (s.v. **wōstaz*); Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 3 vols (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1959), I, pp. 345–6 (s.v. *eu-*, etc.); and Michiel de Vaan, *Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the Other Italic Languages*, Leiden Indo-European Etymological Dictionary Series, 7 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 665–6 (s.v. *vāstus*).
[43] See Fitzerald, *Rebel Angels*, pp. 183–6; cf. Clark, 'A More Permanent Homeland', p. 87. Brooks, *Restoring Creation*, pp. 260–85, discusses the poem specifically in terms of Guthlac's 'replacement' of the fallen angels in Heaven.

hardly an exile at all, since living an ascetic existence was intended to bring one closer to the heavenly community of God and his (loyal) angels. And whilst the *westen* might be used to introduce space between Guthlac and human settlement, Guthlac is only explicitly spoken about in terms of exile when his demonic adversaries physically remove him from his dwelling and take him to hell.[44] In this regard, Guthlac's experience of the space of the *westen* is figured in much the same way as the Seafarer's voluntary exile in undertaking his metaphorical *peregrinatio*. Indeed, as in *The Seafarer*, a central theme in *Guthlac A* is the parallelism between Guthlac's spiritual struggle and the establishment of his new earthly dwelling on the one hand and the anticipation of his joining the heavenly community with God and the angels on the other.[45] However, although the *westen* provides the poem with its spatial framework, it is not mentioned again in the remaining 522 lines of *Guthlac A*.[46] This space is subsequently referred to as *anad*, 'solitude, desert', on two occasions: when Guthlac prays for the salvation of others and when he is addressed by Bartholomew, respectively, *on þam anade*, 'in that desert' (*Guth A* 333b, 356b). If the *westen* is a space inhabited by demons to be purged from the land, the *anad*—which occurs elsewhere only once, in *Riddle* 60—seems to have somewhat more spiritual associations in the poem.[47] An alternative form, *anett*/*ænett*, is sometimes used to gloss *solitudo*, 'solitude, desert', that is the desert as inhabited by ascetics.[48] However, Guthlac is only able to undertake his solitary occupation of the desert once he has cleared his new dwelling place, the *beorg*, of its demonic inhabitants—that is, once he has imposed a new spatial order on the place.

[44] Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, p. 153; Jones, 'Envisioning the *cenobium*', p. 288.
[45] Conner, 'Sources Studies'; Fitzgerald, *Rebel Angels*, p. 182; Greenfield and Calder, *A New Critical History*, p. 177; David F. Johnson, 'Spiritual Combat in the Land of Canaan in *Guthlac A*', in *Intertexts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture Presented to Paul E. Szarmach*, ed. by Virginia Blanton and Helene Scheck (Tempe, AZ: ACMRS, 2008), pp. 301–17; and Jones, 'Envisioning the *cenobium*', pp. 287–9.
[46] NB The word does occur twice in *Guthlac B* at lines 899a and 935a.
[47] Brooks, *Restoring Creation*, pp. 270–1.
[48] *DOE*, s.v. *anett*.

Consecrating place: Guthlac's beorg

The remoteness of the *beorg* is emphasised early on in the account of Guthlac's ascent of it: in the space of only two lines, the poem relates how Guthlac both *mearclond gesæt*, 'occupied the borderlands' (174a), and *biorg gestah*, 'climbed the hill' (175b).[49] As will be seen below and in the next chapter, the *mearca*, 'marches, borderlands', are the domain of the cannibalistic Mermedonians in *Andreas*, and in *Beowulf* of Grendel and his mother, who are purged from this space by Beowulf. Similarly, Guthlac rids the marches in the *westen* of their demonic inhabitants, and the juxtaposition of the two statements above shows that by seizing control of the place of the *beorg*, Guthlac comes to exert control over wider space of the *westen* as well. The *beorg* figures centrally in most interpretations of *Guthlac A* since it is the site of Guthlac's struggle over his demonic adversaries.[50] The question of the meaning of *beorg* in the poem has plagued critical debate about the poem since Lawrence Shook's assertion that it must mean 'burial mound' or 'barrow'.[51] Paul Reichardt offered a rebuttal of Shook's argument, positing instead that *beorg* signified simply 'mountain' and symbolised Guthlac's spiritual ascent.[52] Karl Wentersdorf subsequently sided with Shook, suggesting that the *beorg* was a 'heathen' burial mound, Christianised by Guthlac.[53] A scholarly consensus has not been reached since this early debate, though there has been rather more of a tendency by critics to take *beorg* to mean 'barrow'.[54] However, as Clark has persuasively demonstrated, such an interpretation rests

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[49] Brooks, *Restoring Creation*, pp. 267–8.

[50] Indeed, as Johnson, 'Spiritual Combat', p. 307, notes, Guthlac's dwelling is referred to as *beorg* 12 times in the poem, more than any other individual lexeme referring to the place: cf. *ham* 'dwelling, home', (10 instances), *lond*, 'land' (10), *eard*, 'land, dwelling' (8), *wong*, 'plain, land' (8), *setl*, 'seat, place' (7), *eþel*, 'country, land' (5), *stow*, 'place' (3), *wic*, 'dwelling place, abode' (3), and *bold*, 'dwelling' (2). See also Clark, 'Temptation of the Barrow', pp. 51–3, nn. 12, 21–2, for line references.

[51] Lawrence K. Shook, 'The Burial Mound in *Guthlac A*', *MP*, 58, 1 (1960), 1–10. The most comprehensive treatment of this debate is in Clark, 'Temptation of the Barrow', pp. 48–60.

[52] Paul F. Reichardt, '*Guthlac A* and the Landscape of Spiritual Perfection', *Neophilologus*, 58 (1974), 331–8.

[53] Karl P. Wentersdorf, '*Guthlac A*: The Battle for the *Beorg*', *Neophilologus*, 62 (1978), 135–42.

[54] Scholars who read *beorg* as 'barrow' include: Anderson, 'The Uncarpentered World', pp. 71–3; Brooks, *Restoring Creation*, p. 232; Calder, '*Guthlac A* and *Guthlac B*'; Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, p. 153; Johnson, 'Spiritual Combat', p. 307; Justin T. Noetzel, 'Monster, Demon, Warrior: St. Guthlac and the Landscape of the

on fairly weak evidence, usually by way of reference to the similarly thorny question concerning the extent to which *Guthlac A* does or—almost certainly—does not draw on Felix's *Vita*, which makes unambiguous reference to Guthlac's *tumulus*.[55] Given Clark's thoroughgoing treatment of this issue, there is little need to rehearse the various arguments here, and I follow her in reading *beorg* as 'hill'. However, it is worth noting that at no point in the poem is the place referred to as *hlæw*, which typically denotes a barrow rather than a naturally occurring elevation; indeed, the dragon's lair in Beowulf, which is unambiguously a barrow, is called both a *beorg* and a *hlæw*.[56] Regardless of this distinction, the precise meaning of *beorg* is less important in *Guthlac A* than the fact that it refers to an elevation of some form and that the poem is fundamentally about place, namely, about a particular piece of land contested by Guthlac and its prior demonic inhabitants.[57] Moreover, as Magennis rightly points out, '[t]reatment of setting is here poetic and symbolic, not realistic', a fact which must figure in any reading of the poem, and, as emphasised throughout this thesis, in any reading of the various places encountered throughout the Old English poetic corpus.[58]

One of the central themes in *Guthlac A* is Guthlac's renunciation of all earthly wealth in order to gain access to eternal heavenly joy. This is unsurprising, of course, for a poem which celebrates the ascetic life and draws on the Antonine tradition. References to the transience of earthly things occur throughout the poem (e.g. at lines 43–4, 60–80, 119–26, 318b–22, 330,

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Anglo-Saxon Fens', *Comitatus*, 45 (2014), 105–31 (pp. 121–9); Fred C. Robinson, 'The Significance of Names in Old English Literature', *Anglia*, 86 (1968), 14–58 (pp. 48–9); Semple, 'A Fear of the Past', and *Perceptions of the Prehistoric*, pp. 151–3; and Alfred K. Siewers, 'Landscapes of Conversion: Guthlac's Mound and Grendel's Mere as Expressions of Anglo-Saxon Nation-Building', *Viator*, 34 (2003), 1–39 (p. 24). Critics who favour 'hill' or 'mountain' include: Clark, 'Temptation of the Barrow'; Clemoes, *Interactions of Thought*, pp. 445–6; Maj-Britt Frenze, 'Holy Heights in the Anglo-Saxon Imagination: Guthlac's *beorg* and Sacred Death', *JEGP*, 117 (2018), 315–42 (p. 316); Magennis, *Images of Community*, p. 182; and *The Guthlac Poems*, ed. by Roberts, pp. 132, 186.

[55] Clark, 'Temptation of the Barrow'.

[56] For discussion, see Chapter 4.

[57] Lindy Brady, 'Colonial Desire or Political Disengagement?: The Contested Landscape of *Guthlac A*', *JEGP*, 115 (2016), 61–78 (pp. 63–4); Clark, 'A More Permanent Homeland', pp. 75–6; Johnson, 'Spiritual Combat', pp. 307–8; Magennis, *Images of Community*, p. 181; Neville, p. 128; Manish Sharma, 'A Reconsideration of *Guthlac A*: The Extremes of Saintliness', *JEGP*, 101 (2002), 185–200 (p. 195); and Wentersdorf, 'Battle for the *Beorg*', p. 135.

[58] Magennis, *Images of Community*, p. 180.

371–3, etc.), and the contrast between earthly pleasures and eternal heavenly joy is made explicit in, for instance, lines 60–80.[59] In fact, that the attainment of the heavenly community will figure prominently in the poem is suggested in the poem's first prologue, in which an angelic speaker greets the soul arriving in Heaven thus: *Eart nu tidfara / to þam halgan ham* […] *þær biþ engla dream*, 'You are now a timely traveller(?) to that holy home, […] where there is the joy of angels' (9b–11b).[60] The angel goes on,

He him ece lean
healdeð on heofonum, þær se hyhsta
ealra cyninga cyning ceastrum wealdeð.
Ðæt sind þa getimbru þe no tydriað,
ne þam fore yrmþum þe þær in wuniað
lif aspringeð, ac him bið lenge hu sel;
geoguþe brucað ond Godes miltsa.

[He keeps an eternal reward for them
in the heavens, where the highest
king of all kings rules the cities.
Those are the buildings that will never decay;
nor, because of miseries, does life fail
those who dwell there, but for them the longer [they are there] the better;
they enjoy youth and God's mercy.] (*Guth A* 15b–21)

This allusion to the built space of eternal Heaven (discussed in this thesis's Conclusion) contrasts with the transient terrestrial constructions of Heorot and the ruin discussed in Chapter 1. Moreover, unlike the elegies which make frequent reference to the *earmþu*, 'misery, wretchedness', of earthly life, in Heaven life does not fail *fore yrmþum*, 'because of miseries' (*Guth A* 19a). And, confirming the assertion in *The Wanderer* that the heavenly community awaits *þam þe are seceð*, 'the one who seeks (God's) mercy' (*Wan* 114b), this passage too promises that those who dwell in Heaven *brucað* […] *Godes miltsa*, 'enjoy God's mercy' (*Guth*

[59] *The Guthlac Poems*, ed. by Roberts, pp. 31–2.
[60] NB *The Guthlac Poems*, ed. by Roberts, pp. 125–6, 220, opts for the rather more legalistic 'traveller under summons' for this 'nonceword', a *hapax legomenon* with parallels in *Beo* 502a and *Exo* 208a.

A 21). Finally, just as the heavenly cities are ruled by *se hyhsta / ealra cyninga cyning*, 'the highest king of all kings' (16b–17a), so too is Heaven the highest of all places, as the poem later describes: *on heofonum, heahgetimbru, / seld on swegle*, 'in the heavens, high-built, a seat in Heaven' (584b–5a). In order, then, for Guthlac to leave behind the *yrmþu*, 'miseries', of earthly life below, and to obtain the heavenly community and God's mercy on high, he must also elevate himself both physically and spiritually above the world around him. Indeed, this contrast is established as soon as line 93 of the poem, according to which Guthlac *man eall forseah, / eorðlic æþelu, upp gemunde / ham in heofonum*, 'rejected all sin and earthly nobility, was mindful of the home *up in heaven*' (96b–8a), and thus *he ana ongan / beorgseþel bugan*, 'alone he began to inhabit a hill-dwelling(?)' (101b–2a).[61] As Manish Sharma stresses, 'the theme of the ascent […] is of primary significance' in the poem; by moving into the *mearclond* of the *westen* in order to ascend the *beorg*, Guthlac 'moves to extreme space on a horizontal, as well as vertical, axis and approaches the limits of both earthly and spiritual habitation'.[62] The link between these earthly and spiritual habitations is established early on in the poem by the patronage of Guthlac by a guardian angel, who later turns out to be St Bartholomew. Bartholomew instructs Guthlac and gives him spiritual nourishment *þæt him leofedan londes wynne, / bold on beorhge*, 'such that the joys of the land pleased him, his dwelling on the hill' (139–40a). The pleasure that Guthlac takes in the land is not a question of aesthetic appreciation, however. The significance of this place lies, rather, in the fact that it is the site of Guthlac's spiritual journey:

Wæs seo londes stow
bimiþen fore monnum, oþ þæt meotud onwrah
beorg on bearwe, þa se bytla cwom
se þær haligne ham arærde,

[61] The second element in *beorgseþel*, a *hapax legomenon*, is generally understood as form of *setl*, 'seat, dwelling'. See Bosworth–Toller, s.v. *beorgseðel*; and *DOE*, s.v. *beorgsetl*.
[62] Sharma, pp. 195, 199.

nales þy he giemde þurh gitsunga
lænes lifwelan, ac þæt lond Gode
fægre gefreoþode, siþþan feond oferwon
Cristes cempa.

[That place in the land had been
hidden from people, until the creator revealed
the hill in a grove, where the builder came,
the one who raised a holy home there—
by no means did he, through greed, care for
fleeting earthly wealth, but he protected that land
well for God, since Christ's champion
had overcome the enemy.] (*Guth A* 146b–53a)

This previously hidden site is revealed uniquely to Guthlac, whose intention as a *bytla*, 'builder' (148b), to establish a dwelling place—*haligne ham*, 'a holy home' (149), not in Heaven but on earth—is contrasted with the hitherto uncultivated space of the *beorg on bearwe*, 'hill in a grove' (148a), through double alliteration on *b*-.[63] Similarly, the spiritual significance of Guthlac's mission is emphasised through the contrast of the doubly alliterating *lænes lifwelan*, 'fleeting earthly wealth' (151a), which Guthlac does not care for, with *þæt lond*, 'that land' (151b), which Guthlac will protect for God. The remote, secret nature of the place and its significance for God is reiterated in the following lines: *he ana gesæt / dygle stowe*, '[Guthlac] alone occupied the hidden place' (158b–9a); and *Stod seo dygle stow Dryhtne in gemyndum*[,] *idel ond æmen, eþelriehte feor*, 'The hidden place was in the Lord's thoughts, empty and uninhabited, far from [Guthlac's] ancestral seat' (215–16).[64] That Guthlac finds himself far from his former *eþelrieht*, 'ancestral seat', suggests, according to Lindy Brady, that 'distance from society', and therefore from human jurisdiction, is largely to blame for the contested ownership of the *beorg*.[65] Nonetheless, Guthlac is instructed by God (251b–2a) to establish his

[63] For a discussion of building and words referring to buildings in the poem, see Jones, 'Envisioning the *cenobium*', pp. 273–9.
[64] Cf. the description of Grendel and his mother's mere as *dygel lond*, 'a hidden land' (*Beo* 1357b), discussed in the next chapter.
[65] Brady, 'Colonial Desire', p. 67.

new *eorðlic eþel*, 'earthly homeland' (261a), on the *beorg*, demonstrating that whatever the human laws governing land ownership, Guthlac can claim the *beorg*—despite the demons' occupation of it—on God's authority.[66] In any case, the site of his new home is not just hidden from others, but is *idel ond æmen*, 'empty and uninhabited', as one might expect from a place found in the *westen*, or in Isidore's *desertum*. That the place is *idel ond æmen* suggests that the demons' claim to the *beorg* is insubstantial: although they dwell there, the place is regardless deemed to be 'uninhabited'.[67] Although the *beorg* and its environs appear to be a contested space, that God, the ultimate lawmaker, has earmarked the place for Guthlac gives the lie to the notion that it ever really belonged to the demons in the first place.

Yet although God ordains that Guthlac shall hold the land, it is only through Guthlac's struggle with its existing demonic inhabitants that he himself is able to triumph spiritually, and thus come to occupy and appreciate his new home.[68] That Guthlac is able to enjoy his dwelling place despite, or even because of, the prospect of combatting demons, and not merely once he has defeated them, speaks to the importance that the future saint attaches to performing God's work—that is the spiritual journey itself and not simply the promise of heavenly reward.[69] Throughout the poem Guthlac's love of the *beorg* is reiterated: *bad on beorge; wæs him botles neod*, '[he] remained on the hill; his desire was for his dwelling' (329);[70] after carrying him to Hell, the demons return Guthlac *to þam leofestan / earde on eorðan*, 'to that dearest dwelling on earth' (427b–8a); and Guthlac lives *bliþe on beorge; wæs his blæd mid Gode*, 'happy on the hill; his joy was in God' (439).[71] As this final example confirms, though, Guthlac's joy is less

[66] For a convincing reading of the poem in terms of Anglo-Saxon practices of land tenure, see Clark, 'A More Permanent Homeland'.
[67] Clark, 'A More Permanent Homeland', p. 76.
[68] Siewers, 'Landscapes of Conversion', interprets Guthlac's triumph over his demonic adversaries as a manifestation of Anglo-Saxon colonial conquest over British inhabitants of the land; for a convincing rebuttal of this suggestion, however, see Brady, 'Colonial Desire'.
[69] Brady, 'Colonial Desire', pp. 68–70.
[70] NB Although Shook, 'The Burial Mound', p. 7, translated *on* as 'in' here (cf. his preference for translating *beorg* as 'burial mound'), Clark, 'Temptation of the Barrow', p. 56, notes the ambiguity of prepositions, and especially *on*, here and in OE poetry more generally.
[71] As noted by Brady, 'Colonial Desire', p. 70, who discusses these and other similar examples.

about the place itself than it is about his joy in and love for God, just as 'Guthlac's spiritual, not physical, triumph is what matters in this poem'.[72] As such, it would be inappropriate to speak here of the modern notion that somewhere can exude a 'sense of place'. Instead, the significance of the place for Guthlac is its capacity for spiritual development, something which is further conveyed through the indebtedness of *Guthlac A* to certain Christian and classical tropes, namely the Anglo-Saxon 'interim paradise' and the *locus amoenus* (discussed below).

After their initial appearance at the *beorg* (185b–6), the demons taunt Guthlac, who, they claim, *for wlence on westenne / beorgas bræce*, 'out of pride took the hills in the desert' (208–9a), which they are no longer permitted to occupy (220–5).[73] Steadfast in his faith in God, and *mid gæstlicum wæpnum*, 'with spiritual weapons' (177b–8a)—notably for this former warrior, and like Beowulf in his fight against Grendel, not physical weapons[74]—Guthlac rebuts the demons (240b–61). Here, the poem also relates that, because of Guthlac, *Sceoldon wræcmæcgas / ofgiefan gnornende grene beorgas*, 'The outcasts, lamenting, had to give up the green hills' (231b–2). The greenness of the place, both of Guthlac's hill and those around it, 'impl[ies] qualities of openness, fertility, and thus desirability', as is reiterated elsewhere in the poem.[75] After his subsequent fight with the demons—curtailed in the surviving text due to a loss of a folio (c. 70 lines) between lines 368 and 369[76]—Guthlac orders them once more to leave *þone grene wong*, 'that green plain' (477a), and at the poem's climax it is again described as *se grena wong*, 'the green plain' (746a).[77] As elsewhere in the Old English poetic corpus, here the colour green has overt paradisiacal connotations. Indeed, Ananya Kabir has shown that descriptions of the so-called 'interim paradise'—a quasi-heavenly place in the Anglo-

[72] Brady, 'Colonial Desire', p. 75.
[73] On Guthlac's and the demons' competing claims to the *beorg*, see esp. Brady, 'Colonial Desire'; and Clark, 'A More Permanent Homeland'.
[74] Hill, 'The Soldier of Christ', p. 68; Fitzgerald, *Rebel Angels*, p. 180.
[75] Brady, 'Colonial Desire', p. 71.
[76] *The Guthlac Poems*, ed. by Roberts, p. 13. On this missing text, see Robert D. Stevick, 'The Length of "Guthlac A"', *Viator*, 13 (1982), 15–48.
[77] Kabir, p. 144, n. 11, points out that variants of *grene wang* are also found in *Men* 206–7; *Rid* 12.2; *Rid* 40.83; and *Rid* 66.5.

Saxon religious imagination which conflated the first earthly paradise of Eden with Heaven—are typically characterised by the colour green in Old English poetry.[78] In *Guthlac A*, paradisiacal associations are hardly surprising for a poem which is concerned with a saint's establishment of a holy dwelling place on earth through which he hopes to bring himself closer, after his death, to God's holy community in Heaven.[79] Indeed, despite the desirability of his earthly dwelling, Guthlac's *ham in heofonum*, 'home in the heavens' (98a), is, as Brady puts it, 'the only space worth gaining'.[80] And as Maj-Britt Frenze has recently argued, although the moment of Guthlac's death itself is not described in the poem, Guthlac might be understood as undergoing a sort of 'figurative hill-death *in imitatio Christi*' in order to achieve salvation and obtain the heavenly community.[81] Guthlac's verdant hilltop dwelling might be viewed, then, as only an 'interim' residence, or even as a manifestation of the interim paradise itself, a holding pen before Guthlac can be admitted to Heaven proper. Additionally, Magennis has noted the correspondence between the greenness of Guthlac's hill and that of what he calls the 'archetypal' *beorg* of *Maxims II*, cited at the head of this chapter: *Beorh sceal on eorþan grene standan*, 'A hill must stand green on the earth' (*Max II* 34b–35a).[82] According to this tradition, it is in the very nature of hills to be green since 'to say that a thing *sceal* be so is to cause it *to continue to be so*'.[83] Indeed, *Guthlac A* describes a *beorg* which is continuously green and, therefore, continuously desirable to both demons and Guthlac alike.[84] So desirable does the

[78] Kabir, p. 1, notes that certain texts present the interim paradise as 'paradise as an antechamber to heaven, which houses, during the interim period [i.e. before Judgement Day], good souls and those assumed in the body'; for a more detailed definition and discussion of the interim paradise in OE poetry, see esp. pp. 1–13, 141–66. Cf. Hildegard L.C. Tristram, 'Stock Descriptions of Heaven and Hell in Old English Prose and Poetry', *NM*, 79 (1978), 102–13 (p. 106), who also noted this conflation. On the confusion of different understandings of paradise in early Christianity, see *The Phoenix*, ed. by N.F. Blake (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1964), pp. 13–16.
[79] On these associations, see Gernot R. Wieland, 'Anglo-Saxon Visions of Heaven and Hell', in *Imagining the Medieval Afterlife*, ed. by Richard M. Pollard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 89–90.
[80] Brady, 'Colonial Desire', p. 78.
[81] Frenze, 'Holy Heights', p. 316.
[82] Magennis, *Images of Community*, p. 185.
[83] Larrington, p. 163 (emphasis added).
[84] Brady, 'Colonial Desire', pp. 70–1.

saint find this place, in fact, that it is best understood as an instance of the classical *topos* of the *locus amoenus*, 'pleasant place'.

The locus amoenus *in* Guthlac A

Several critics have identified the description of Guthlac's *beorg* at the end of *Guthlac A* as an instance of the *locus amoenus*, suggesting that the hill undergoes a transformation into such a place upon Guthlac's victory over the demons.[85] Others, such as Brady, have observed more astutely that, although the description constitutes an instance of this trope, the presentation of the *beorg* in the poem is fundamentally ambiguous, with features of the *locus amoenus* described throughout the text (e.g. its greenness as discussed above), not only at its climax.[86] Whilst the evidence considered above demonstrates that Brady's observation is largely true, it is also the case that lines 742–8a of the poem do seem to assert some sort of causal relationship between Guthlac's expulsion of the demons and the pleasure that he takes in the place and its avian inhabitants, in what Roberts suggests is 'at first glance pathetic fallacy'.[87] Upon his return to the hill, Guthlac's triumph is heralded by birds, which bless him, and which he in turn feeds and admires (733b–41); the *topos* of the *locus amoenus* then receives its clearest and most sustained expression in the poem. Moreover, the imagery of the place's renewal here is, as Roberts notes, 'used to mark Guthlac's achievement of salvation', if not simply of victory over the demons:[88]

[85] Brooks, *Restoring Creation*, p. 277; Catherine A.M. Clarke, *Literary Landscapes and the Idea of England, 700–1400* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2006), pp. 48–58; Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), pp. 138–39; and Kabir, pp. 144–5. On the *locus amoenus* in hagiography, see: Gregorio Penco, 'Il senso della natura nell'agiografia monastica occidentale', *Studia Monastica*, 11 (1969), 327–34 .
[86] Brady, 'Colonial Desire', pp. 71–2; cf. Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, p. 154.
[87] *The Guthlac Poems*, ed. by Roberts, p. 35.
[88] *The Guthlac Poems*, ed. by Roberts, p. 36.

Smolt wæs se sigewong ond sele niwe,
fæger fugla reord, folde geblowen;
geacas gear budon. Guþlac moste
eadig ond onmod eardes brucan.
Stod se grena wong in Godes wære;
hæfde se heorde, se þe of heofonum cwom,
feondas afyrde.

[The victory-plain was tranquil, and his dwelling new,[89]
the birds' song beautiful, the earth in bloom;
cuckoos announced the [new] year. Guthlac could,
blessed and bold, enjoy his dwelling.
The green plain stood in God's care;
the guardian, the one who had come from heaven,
had expelled the enemies.] (*Guth A* 742–8a)

The *locus amoenus*, as expressed in classical and later medieval Latin literature, was formally defined by Ernst Curtius as a place which comprises 'a beautiful, shaded natural site', 'a tree (or several trees), a meadow, and a spring or brook', occasionally '[b]irdsong and flowers', and, more rarely still, 'a breeze'.[90] Here, as throughout the poem, the text clearly refers to a natural site away from human habitation, and although such a detail is missing in this passage, the poem twice makes reference elsewhere to the *beorg on bearwe*, 'hill in a grove' (148a, 429a), such that the place has trees which provide shelter and shade. Also present is a meadow, or similar topographical feature, in the form of the *sigewong*, 'victory-plain' (742a), and *se grena wong*, 'the green plain' (746a). There is, moreover, birdsong and flowers: *fæger fugla reord, folde geblowen; / geacas gear budon*, 'the birds' song [was] beautiful, the earth in bloom; cuckoos announced the [new] year' (743–4a).[91] The only common feature of the *locus amoenus* missing here is a body of water, though this is perhaps not surprising for a poem

[89] Since Guthlac seems to have inhabited the *beorg* for some time by this stage, perhaps the sense of *niwe* here is, rather, 'renewed', cf. (*ge*)*niwian*, 'to renew, make new, renovate, restore'. See Bosworth–Toller, s.v. *niwian*, *geniwian*.
[90] Curtius, *European Literature*, pp. 192–200, at 195.
[91] In contrast to the often mournful cry of the cuckoo elsewhere in Old English and other medieval European poetry, *The Guthlac Poems*, ed. by Roberts, pp. 156–7, suggests that the cuckoo as the herald of spring should be seen as 'a symbol of man's resurrection on the Day of Judgement'; cf. Lee, *The Guest-Hall*, pp. 107–8.

which takes places in the desert, whatever form that desert takes.[92] That this passage draws on the tradition of the *locus amoenus* is corroborated by the various parallels with the opening lines of *The Phoenix*.[93] This verse rendering of the early fourth-century *Carmen de ave phoenice*, usually attributed to Lactantius, contains the most sustained instance of the *topos* in Old English poetry.[94] Lines 1–84 of the poem describe in considerable detail the dwelling place of the phoenix, repeatedly detailing the conventional features of the *locus amoenus*—or the *locus felix* in Lactantius's phrase—and deploying what Hildegard Tristram calls the '*þær is* syntagm' in order to convey the superlative nature of the place and its clement weather, often expressed apophatically by enumerating what there is *not*.[95] Moreover, Kabir views the 'ideal landscape' of *The Phoenix* as a manifestation of the interim paradise, discussed above,[96] and the parallels with *Guthlac A* in the following passage from *The Phoenix* are certainly suggestive, begging the question as to whether Guthlac's holy home too may have been understood as an instance of the interim paradise, or at least as gesturing towards it:

> Smylte is se sigewong; sunbearo lixeð,
> wuduholt wynlic. Wæstmas ne dreosað,
> beorhte blede, ac þa beamas a
> grene stondað, swa him God bibead.

[92] However, *Guth B* 1325b–35a, like Felix's *Vita*, does refer to the island where Guthlac lives and to his servant's travel away from the island by boat.
[93] Note that there is also a later so-called *Prose Phoenix*, found in London British Library, MS Cotton Vespasian D. xiv, fols. 166r–68r, and in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 198, fols. 374b–7a. For an edition of the text found in MS Cotton Vespasian D. xiv, see *The Phoenix*, ed. by Blake, pp. 94–6. For a discussion of the presentation of the interim paradise in the *Prose Phoenix*, see Kabir, pp. 167–89.
[94] Kabir, pp. 160–1. On the *Carmen*, see *The Phoenix*, ed. by Blake, pp. 17–19. For the Latin text itself, see *The Phoenix*, ed. by Blake, pp. 88–93; and for a translation, *Sources and Analogues*, trans. by Allen and Calder, pp. 114–18. For discussion of the other Latin sources of the OE *Phoenix*, see E.K.C. Gorst, 'Latin Sources of the Old English *Phoenix*', *NQ*, 53, 2 (2006), 136–42. And on the presentation of the *locus amoenus* in the *Carmen*, see Steen, pp. 40–1; and B. Stock, 'Cosmology and Rhetoric in the "Phoenix of Lactantius"', *Classica et Mediaevalia*, 26 (1956), 246–57.
[95] Tristram, pp. 102–7; cf. Kabir, pp. 160–4; Magennis, *Images of Community*, pp. 146–7; Neville, pp. 61–2; and Steen, pp. 43–5. For a recent discussion of the insular 'spatial *imaginaire*' of the poem's opening 84 lines, see Helen Appleton, 'The Insular Landscape of the Old English Poem *The Phoenix*', *Neophilologus*, 101 (2017), 585–602, at 588.
[96] *The Phoenix*, ed. by Blake, p. 30; Kabir, pp. 164–5. Cf., however, Daniel G. Calder, 'The Vision of Paradise: A Symbolic Reading of the Old English *Phoenix*', *ASE*, 1 (1972), 167–81, who reads the phoenix's dwelling as paradise itself.

[The victory-plain is tranquil; the sunny grove shines,
the wood is joyful. Fruits do not perish—
bright crops—but those trees stand
always green, as God ordered them to.] (*Phoen* 33–6)

In addition to the near-identical opening half-lines in each of these passages, this short excerpt from the opening of *The Phoenix* has a number of other similarities with *Guthlac A* 742–8a: the dwelling place of the phoenix is a wooded grove (*sunbearo*, 33b; *wuduholt*, 34a), in which *þa beamas a / grene stondað, swa him God bibead*, 'those trees stand always green, as God ordered them to' (*Phoen* 35b–6), much as in *Guthlac A*, *Stod se grena wong*, 'The green plain stood' (*Guth A* 746a), not as God commanded, but in his care (*in Godes wære*, 746b). In *The Phoenix*, the flourishing of fruits is emphasised (*Phoen* 34b–5a), just as in *Guthlac A*, *folde geblowen*, 'the earth [is] in bloom' (*Guth A* 743b). Moreover, like Guthlac's elevated *beorg* which is far from human habitation, the dwelling place of the phoenix is an *iglond*, here probably meaning 'island' (9a), standing *twelfum herra, / folde fæðmrimes*, 'higher than the land by twelve fathoms' (28b–9a), and situated *feor heonan*, 'far from here' (*Phoen* 1b), and *afyrred* […] *manfremmendum*, 'far-removed from evil-doers' (5b–6).[97] The place is similarly described as being in the *westen*, 'desert' (161a), emphasising further its distance from human settlement.[98] The desirability of the place is also highlighted throughout the opening passage of *The Phoenix*, in which it is described, to take just one prevalent lexical stem, as *wynnum geblissad*, 'blessed with delights' (7b), *wynsum*, 'pleasant' (13a), *wynnum geblowen*, 'flourishing with delights' (27b), and as *wynlond*, 'a pleasant land' (82a).[99] It is the concatenation of the features discussed here—along with those excluded through apophasis

[97] For discussion of the ostensible insularity of the landscape depicted—as an example of the *insula gentium*—see Appleton, pp. 587–8, 593–9. Cf. the instances of *igland* and *ealand* used to refer to Mermedonia in *And* 15a and 28a, discussed below. On the question of whether anyone besides evil-doers can access the phoenix's land, see Alfred Bammesberger, 'The Old English *Phoenix*, lines 3b–6', *NQ*, 51 (2004), 223–5.
[98] Unlike the description of Guthlac's dwelling, however, *The Phoenix* describes the flowing waters of the place at some length (62b–70).
[99] See *The Phoenix*, ed. by Blake, pp. 30–1.

elsewhere in the poem's opening lines—which makes the phoenix's dwelling place a *locus amoenus*, 'pleasant place', or *wynlond* in the Old English, *locus felix* in the Latin original.[100] Similarly in *Guthlac A*, the repeated references to the verdancy and fertility of his dwelling place on the *beorg* serve collectively to reinforce that this, too, is a *locus amoenus*. But as Norman Blake observes of *The Phoenix*, the poem's descriptions of what we might today call the natural world, especially in the first half of the poem, 'were subservient to [the poet's] real purpose, the revelation of the Christian message to be found in a created being'.[101]

Although place, and specifically the *beorg* on which Guthlac makes his dwelling, is fundamental to the interpretation of *Guthlac A*, the surrounding space of the *westen* is crucial to the poem's spatial framework. And like the descriptions of the 'natural world' in *The Phoenix*, the presentation of place and space in *Guthlac A* were similarly 'subservient to [the poet's] real purpose', namely, that only through spiritual betterment, and resisting temptation, can one hope to attain the heavenly community. However, as Magennis puts it, so too could 'the sublimity of heavenly community […] be seen extending into the world' via the would-be saint who, like St Bartholomew, acts as conduit between the heavenly and the earthly habitations.[102] Guthlac's desire for Heaven is projected onto the paradisiacal place that he inhabits on earth—probably an allusion to the interim paradise. For anyone reading or hearing the poem, the desirability of Heaven as a place is made manifest in the desirability of the *locus amoenus* of Guthlac's *beorg*. Crucially, Guthlac's inhabitation of the *beorg*, and purging of its prior demonic occupants, turns this part of the previously desolate *westen*—*idel ond æmen*, 'empty and uninhabited' (by humans, at least)—into a consecrated, holy place, demonstrating once again that place is far from immutable in the Old English poetic tradition, capable of being transformed and reinvented. And, like the other places considered so far in this thesis, Guthlac's

[100] The Old English poet actually glosses Lactantius's *locus felix* as *æþelast londa*, 'noblest of places' (2b).
[101] *The Phoenix*, ed. by Blake, p. 28.
[102] Magennis, *Images of Community*, p. 10. Indeed, Guthlac is described as *se heorde, se þe of heofonum cwom*, 'the guardian, the one who had come from heaven' (*Guth A* 747).

place points towards some other, in this case transcendental signification. However, there is perhaps a certain irony in Guthlac's establishment of this holy place: in order to achieve the heavenly community after his death, Guthlac must first leave the communal coenobitic life behind and establish a solitary hermitage far from human society. Guthlac's rejection of human social space in favour of an isolated, contemplative existence is only possible, and indeed desirable, because of the promise of everlasting joy in the only place that matters: Heaven.

Traversing space: the sea in Andreas

The Old English *Andreas*, a poetic rendering of the life of St Andrew, survives in the late tenth-century Vercelli Book, fols. 29v–52v.[103] Like *Guthlac A*, no source has been identified for *Andreas*, yet most critics agree that it was probably adapted from a no longer extant Latin intermediary between the Greek *Πράξεις Ανδρέου καὶ Ματθεία εἰς τὴν πόλιν τῶν ἀνθρωποφάγων*, 'Acts of Andrew and Matthew in the City of the Cannibals' (commonly known as the *Praxeis*) and the Old English poem.[104] *Andreas* also displays many similarities with the surviving Latin recensions of the life of St Andrew, *Acta Andreae et Matthiae apud anthropophagos*, especially that found in Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, 1104 (known as the *Casanatensis*), and, to a lesser extent, in Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, lat. 1274 (the *Vaticanus*), as well as three fragments; none of these, however, is the source for the Old English *Andreas*.[105] There are, moreover, two distinct prose Old English accounts of the life of St Andrew: the first of these survives in full in the eleventh-century Cambridge, Corpus

[103] For the most recent edition of *Andreas*, and for a detailed discussion of the manuscript, see *Andreas*, ed. by North and Bintley, pp. 8–26.
[104] *Andreas and The Fates of the Apostles*, ed. by Kenneth R. Brooks (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), p. xv; and *Andreas*, ed. by North and Bintley, p. 4.
[105] The Latin recensions are edited together in *Die lateinischen Bearbeitungen der Acta Andreae et Matthiae apud anthropophagos*, ed. by Franz Blatt Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, 12 (Giessen and Copenhagen: Tüpelmann, 1930); for a translation of the *Casanatensis* text, see *Sources and Analogues*, trans. by Allen and Calder, pp. 15–34.

Christi College, MS 198, and, incomplete, in Blickling Homily 18; the second is found in Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies* I.38, *Natale Sancti Andreei*.[106] Whilst no direct Latin source for *Andreas* has been identified, its relationships with other Old English poems—most notably *Beowulf* and the poems of Cynewulf—have been documented in great detail. Building on Arthur Fritzsche's initial identification of the *Andreas*-poet's indebtedness to the poetry of Cynewulf and to *Beowulf*, the work of Claes Schaar, Arthur Brodeur, and, in more recent decades, Anita Riedinger, Alison Powell, Bill Friesen, and Andy Orchard has confirmed the extent of borrowings in *Andreas* beyond reasonable doubt, and rescued the poem from the rather uncharitable appraisals of earlier critics.[107] Whilst it is not the purpose of the following discussion to shed further light on this question *per se*, it will be seen, unsurprisingly perhaps, that in descriptions of Mermedonia in particular, *Andreas* draws extensively on the poetic diction of *Beowulf*. And as with the foregoing analysis of *Guthlac A*, given the absence of a known Latin source for the poem, references to the Latin *Casanatensis*, the Latin version with which *Andreas* has the most in common, will be made only sparingly.[108]

[106] For overviews of the relationship between *Andreas* and its various analogues, see *Andreas*, ed. by North and Bintley, pp. 4–6; Bill Friesen, 'Visions and Revisions: The Sources and Analogues of the Old English *Andreas*' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Toronto, 2008), pp. 1–7; and Alison Powell, 'Verbal Parallels in *Andreas* and its Relationship to *Beowulf* and Cynewulf' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 2002), pp. 7–13. For the Corpus text, see *Bright's Old English Grammar and Reader*, ed. by F.G. Cassidy and Richard N. Ringler (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), pp. 203–219; for the Blickling text, see *The Blickling Homilies of the Tenth Century*, ed. and trans. by Richard Morris, 3 vols, EETS, o.s. 58, 63 & 73 (London: Oxford University Pres, 1874–1880; repr. 1967), pp. 228–49; and for Ælfric's homily, see *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series*, ed. by Clemoes, pp. 507–19.

[107] Arthur Fritzsche, 'Das angelsächsische Gedicht *Andreas* und Cynewulf', *Anglia*, 2 (1879), 441–96; Claes Schaar, *Critical Studies in the Cynewulf Group*, Lund Studies in English, 17 (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1949); Arthur G. Brodeur, 'A Study of Diction and Style in Three Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poems', in *Nordica et Anglica: Studies in Honor of Stéfan Einarsson*, ed. by Allan H. Orrick (The Hague: Mouton, 1968), pp. 97–114 (pp. 97–105); Anita Riedinger, 'The Poetic Formula in *Andreas*, *Beowulf*, and the Tradition' (unpublished PhD dissertation, New York University, 1985), and 'The Formulaic Relationship between *Beowulf* and *Andreas*', in *Heroic Poetry in the Anglo-Saxon Period: Studies in Honor of Jess B. Bessinger*, ed. by Helen Damico and John Leyerle, Studies in Medieval Culture, 32 (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1993), pp. 283–312; Powell, 'Verbal Parallels', pp. 105–232; Friesen, pp. 107–243; and Orchard, 'The Originality of *Andreas*', pp. 331–70, esp. 358–70, who also details borrowings from *Guthlac A* and *B*, *The Phoenix*, *Judith* and *The Whale*. For an earlier dissenting view, now widely rejected, see Leonard J. Peters, 'The Relationship of the Old English *Andreas* to *Beowulf*', *PMLA*, 66 (1951), 844–63. For a summary of earlier views, see Powell, 'Verbal Parallels', pp. 2–4.

[108] *Andreas*, ed. by Brooks, p. xviii; and *Sources and Analogues*, trans. by Allen and Calder, p. 15.

Aside from the question of the text's indebtedness to Cynewulf, *Beowulf* and other Old English poems, much criticism of *Andreas* has dealt with biblical *figura* and typology in the poem.[109] In this vein of scholarship, critics have analysed *Andreas* in terms of its symbolism relating to conversion and baptism, Old Testament typology, the Passion of Christ, the Harrowing of Hell, and as an allegory for spiritual nourishment.[110] A flurry of studies in the last decade or so, however, has been concerned with the city of Mermedonia, its inhabitants, and their conversion by Andrew.[111] In its analysis of the central function of place in the poem's structure, the following discussion situates itself within this more recent critical discourse. Where the first half of the poem utilises the sea as a means of introducing distance and therefore space between Andrew and Mermedonia—a distance lamented by Andrew (*And* 189–92)—the second half dwells on the place of Mermedonia as a site of conversion and of spiritual betterment. The poet of Andreas seems to have utilised descriptions of the city as a device for signposting key moments in the narrative, and there is also evidently productive engagement with *Beowulf*, since many of the passages describing Mermedonia have parallels—many of them unique—with architectural depictions in *Beowulf*. The ramifications of these aspects for

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[109] For brief overviews, see Robert Boenig, *Saint and Hero: Andreas and Medieval Doctrine* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1991), pp. 15–20; and Edward B. Irving Jr, 'A Reading of *Andreas*: The Poem as Poem', *ASE*, 12 (1983), 215–37 (p. 215), whose own analysis deliberately moves away from such typological/figural readings.

[110] See respectively Daniel Anlezark, *Water and Fire: The Myth of the Flood in Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 210–30, James W. Earl, 'The Typological Structure of *Andreas*', in *Old English Literature in Context: Ten Essays*, ed. by John D. Niles (Cambridge: Brewer, 1980), pp. 66–89, Thomas D. Hill, 'Figural Narrative in *Andreas*: The Conversion of the Mermedonians', *NM*, 70 (1969), 261–73, and Marie M. Walsh, 'The Baptismal Flood in the Old English *Andreas*: Liturgical and Typological Depths', *Traditio*, 33 (1977), 137–58; John Thomas Casteen, '*Andreas*: Mermedonian Cannibalism and Figural Narrative', *NM*, 75 (1974), 74–8, and Penn R. Szittya, 'The Living Stone and the Patriarchs: Typological Imagery in *Andreas*, Lines 706–810', *JEGP*, 72 (1973), 167–72; Frederick M. Biggs, 'The Passion of Andreas: *Andreas* 1398–1491', *SP*, 85 (1988), 413–27, and Robert E. Bjork, *The Old English Verse Saints' Lives: A Study in Direct Discourse and the Iconography of Style*, McMaster Old English Studies and Texts, 4 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), pp. 110–24; Constance B. Hieatt, 'The Harrowing of Mermedonia: Typological Patterns in the Old English *Andreas*', *NM*, 77 (1976), 49–62; and David Hamilton, 'The Diet and Digestion of Allegory in *Andreas*', *ASE*, 1 (1972), 147–58.

[111] See Michael D.J. Bintley, 'Demythologising Urban Landscapes in *Andreas*', *LSE*, n.s. 40 (2009), 105–18; Alexandra Bolintineanu, 'The Land of Mermedonia in the Old English *Andreas*', *Neophilologus*, 93 (2009), 149–64; Lindy Brady, 'Echoes of Britons on a Fenland Frontier in the Old English *Andreas*', *RES*, 252 (2010), 669–89; Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, pp. 157–61; Lori Ann Garner, 'The Old English *Andreas* and the Mermedonian Cityscape', *Essays in Medieval Studies*, 24 (2007), 53–63, and *Structuring Spaces*, pp. 104–11; Michelet, *Creation, Migration, and Conquest*, pp. 163–97; and *Andreas*, ed. by North and Bintley, pp. 81–96.

how place is presented in the poem will be explored further below. Before addressing Andrew's final destination, however, it is necessary to consider his traversal of the space of the sea.

As Michael Bintley has recently put it, '*Andreas* is unusually wet, even for an Old English poem.'[112] Indeed, one cannot but be struck by the prevalence of water, and especially the sea in *Andreas*. The sea is the *locus* of action in the poem across 637 lines of text: from Andrew's first mention of his journey *ofer deop gelad*, 'over deep [sea-]paths' (190b), to his and his thegns' eventual arrival *on land* (827b), action and discourse at sea account for some 37% of the text of *Andreas*. This does not include the further 53 lines (c. 3%) describing the stone pillar's memorable unleashing of a flood described in lines 1522–53 and 1572b–95a, the other passing references to the sea dotted throughout the rest of the poem, or indeed the considerable volume of blood spilt on the streets of Mermedonia.[113] To qualify Bintley's statement, then, *Andreas* is at least 40% wet. And to further contextualise these figures, direct speech, a crucial aspect of the poem's structure, as Robert Bjork has argued, accounts for 54% of *Andreas*, almost half of which (i.e. over a quarter of the whole poem) takes place between Andrew and either God or Jesus, whilst boarding or on board the ship to Mermedonia.[114] Prior to Bintley's study of water in *Andreas*, however, the only sustained reading of the sea in *Andreas* was Karen Olsen's exploration of the metaphorical use of terrestrial topographical features to describe the sea, a commonplace of Old English poetry, but one which is used particularly effectively in *Andreas*.[115] Several critics have also identified another crucial aspect of the sea journey in the poem: its function as a metaphor for the soul's—and specifically Andrew's soul's—passage through this earthly life, that is the *lifes weg*, 'the way of (or to) life'

[112] Michael D.J. Bintley, '*Aquas ab Aquis*: Aqueous Creation in *Andreas*', in *Meanings of Water in Early Medieval England*, ed. by Carolyn Twomey and Daniel Anlezark, Studies in the Early Middle Ages, 47 (Turnhout: Brepols 2021), p. 191.
[113] For discussion of Andrew's spilt blood in this context, see Bintley, '*Aquas ab Aquis*', pp. 197–9.
[114] Clemoes, *Interactions of Thought*, p. 252 (figures slightly adapted). On direct discourse in *Andreas*, and its role in structuring the poem, see Bjork, *The Old English Verse Saints' Lives*, pp. 110–24.
[115] Karen Olsen, 'The Dichotomy of Land and Sea in the Old English *Andreas*', *ES*, 79 (1998), 385–94; for examples, see esp. p. 385, n. 4. Even Bintley, '*Aquas ab Aquis*', pp. 192–6, only dedicates a handful of pages of discussion specifically to the sea.

(*And* 170b), that is, the path to eternal life.[116] However, the two characteristics of the sea explored here are its spatial role in introducing distance between Andrew and Mermedonia and its function as a space of danger which foreshadows the greater perils which lie ahead on land.

The sea's dual function as an expanse to be traversed and as a threat to be overcome makes for a marked difference from the presentation of space in *Guthlac A*, in which the featureless desert of the eremitic tradition fades into the background of the poem as the *beorg* comes into focus. In *Andreas*, in contrast, the sea is a continuous presence, even once Andrew has arrived in Mermedonia. The desert around Guthlac's *beorg* also serves, like the sea in *The Wanderer*, as a spatial container which delimits the place of the action of the poem, whilst also conveying Guthlac's voluntary—against the Wanderer's involuntary—separation from human society. In *Andreas*, however, the 'desert' of the sea is far from featureless, and is less a spatial container than it is an obstacle to be surmounted. Here the sea has more in common, perhaps, with that of *The Seafarer*, in which the sea journey as the journey of the soul is also a prevalent metaphor. Nevertheless, all three of these sea voyagers are subject to the afflictions of the sea and its inimical winter weather: the Wanderer must stir *hrimcealde sæ*, 'the frost-cold sea' (*Wan* 4b), whilst the Seafarer inhabits *iscealdne sæ*, 'the ice-cold sea' (Sea 14b).

Andrew, though, is subject to the full violence of the sea and stormy weather, as seen throughout fitt 14 of *Andreas* (lines 352–468). Such descriptions are not found at all in the *Praxeis*, and described in only nine lines in the *Casanatensis*, demonstrating the *Andreas*-poet's capacity for expansion and innovation.[117] The following lines are representative of the way in which the sea is depicted elsewhere in this fitt, especially in lines 438–49a, and describe how Jesus and one of his angels, in disguise, comfort Andrew and his men:

[116] Hamilton, 'Diet and Digestion', p. 158; Lisa Kiser, '*Andreas* and the *lifes weg*: Convention and Innovation in Old English Metaphor', *NM*, 85 (1984), 65–75; Nathan A. Breen, '"What a Long, Strange Trip It's Been": Narration, Movement and Revelation in the Old English *Andreas*', *Essays in Medieval Studies*, 25 (2008), 71–9; and, most recently, Bintley, '*Aquas ab Aquis*', pp. 192–6.
[117] *Andreas*, ed. by Brooks, p. 75.

þæt hie þe eað mihton ofer yða geþring
drohtaþ adreogan þa gedrefed wearð,
onhræred, hwælmere. H*ro*nfisc[118] plegode,
glad geond garsecg, ond se græga mæw
wælgifre wand. Wedercandel swearc,
windas weoxon, wægas grundon,
streamas styredon, strengas gurron,
wædo gewætte; wæteregsa stod
þreata þryðum. Þegnas wurdon
acolmode.

[so that they, over the waves' tumult, might more easily
endure their condition when the whale-sea became
disturbed, stirred up. A whale played,
glided through the ocean, and the grey gull
circled, hungry for the slain. The weather-candle grew dark,
the winds increased, the waves churned,
the currents were stirred up, the ropes rattled,
the sails [were] drenched; the terror of the waters rose up
with the might of armies. The men became
terror-stricken.] (*And* 368–77a)

Apart from the evocative imagery of the darkening skies, powerful winds, tossing waves, and drenched ship and sailors, who understandably *wurdon acolmode*, 'became terror-stricken' (376b–7a)—not to mention the apparently maritime version of the 'beasts of battle' type-scene—this passage is striking for its double-alliteration in all but the last line, with repeated interlinear alliteration on *w-*. There is also extensive paronomasia, with assonance throughout the passage in *eað*/*yð-* (368), *dro-*/*dreo-*/*dre-* (369) and *þrea-*/*þry-* (376), *-ond*/*-and*/*-and*/*-ind*/*-und* (371–3), *Wed-*/*wæd-*/*wætt-*/*wæt-* (372b, 375), *strea-*/*styr-*/*stre-* (374), along with *-ad*, *-ed*, *-æd*, *-ætt*, *-æt*, *-od*, *-eat*, *-od*, and *-ear-*/*-ær-*/*-er-*/*-or-*/*-ar-*/*-ear-*/*-yr-*/*-urr-*/*-ur-*.[119] The four

[118] According to the poem's most recent editors, MS *hornfisc* (370b) means 'whale' or 'orca' since this is probably a metathesised form of *hron*, 'whale', cf. *hronfixas*, 'whale-fishes' (*Beo* 540b). Opting for a more literal translation of the form found in the MS (i.e. 'horn-fish'), Bosworth–Toller and the *DOE* suggest that it means 'garfish' or 'pike'. See *Andreas*, ed. by Brooks, pp. 75, 150; *Andreas*, ed. by North and Bintley, pp. 232, 345; Bosworth–Toller, and *DOE*, s.v. *hornfisc*. Since *hronfisc*, 'whale-fish', alliterates with *hwælmere*, 'whale-sea', and would assonate with *on**hræ**red* in the immediately preceding half-line, the emendation *hron-* seems preferable here. Additionally, given the proximity of *hronfisc* and *glad geond garsecg* in lines 370b–1a, and the proximity in *Beowulf* of *hronfixas* (*Beo* 540b) and the unique parallel *glidon ofer garsecg* (515a), it is even possible that the *Andreas*-poet had the Breca episode in mind here.
[119] It is also notable, albeit perhaps coincidental, that these last instances of assonance (vowel + *-r*) are suggestive of the word *ear*/*ær*, 'sea, ocean', which appears a few lines later in the compound *argeblond*,

strong masculine plural nouns in *-as* and the corresponding past preterite plural verbs in *-on* with incidental interlinear alliteration in *g-* on the fourth lift of this pair of lines (373–4) are both sonically and rhetorically conspicuous. The aural effect of such unrelenting alliteration, assonance and repetition augments the sense of the overwhelming might of the stormy seas, and highlights sub-verbally the peril which Andrew faces and must ultimately overcome in order to reach Mermedonia. Far from simply being 'dramatized as an itemized list', the storm here is foregrounded through, some may argue excessive, decorative sound-play and emphasised as a force to be reckoned with, one which, as Clemoes notes, 'serve[s Andrew] as a means of spiritual attainment', since he must place his trust in God that he will protect Andrew and his men on their voyage to Mermedonia.[120] Whatever other effects this and similar passages in fitt 14 may have, such depictions of the sea suggest that maritime space in *Andreas* is not only vast in extent but also in its capacity to be dangerous. In this way at least it anticipates the yet greater perils which Andrew will face once he arrives on land outside the walls of Mermedonia.

Converting place: The City of Mermedonia

In contrast with the open space of the sea, the city of Mermedonia is depicted as an enclosed place, demarcated from the sea and the world around it.[121] It is twice described as being on what appears to be an 'island': *igland* (15a) and *ealand* (28a). Although Kenneth Brooks suggested that in this context *igland*/*ealand* should properly be understood as 'land bordering on water' or 'land beyond the water', Olivier Grosz rejected this interpretation, arguing instead

'mingling of the ocean' (383a). On the poet's, or scribe's, idiosyncratic spelling of *ear-* in this and related compounds in lines 532a and 853a, see *Andreas*, ed. by Brooks, p. 75.

[120] Clemoes, *Interactions of Thought*, pp. 256–7.

[121] On the probable origin of name of the city and its purported location, see *Andreas*, ed. by Brooks, pp. xxviii–xxx.

that the word should be understood as 'island', and highlighting that the island 'symbolizes the religious exile's complete isolation from an outer world'.[122] Other critics have noted that situating Mermedonia on an island merely underscores its initial remoteness from Andrew and his companions, whilst Bolintineanu suggests that it gestures towards the place's 'otherworldliness', and Brady posits that it 'evok[es] the wilderness' of the English fens.[123] A lack of critical consensus probably stems from the confusion in Old English texts between the theoretically distinct forms *ea-* and *ig-*, as pointed out by Brooks and later by Richard North and Michael Bintley; however, their conclusion that 'Mermedonia appears to lie by an estuary in *Andreas*, on the mainland' seems overly precise, given these ambiguities.[124] Regardless of the exact location of Mermedonia, since Andrew spends over a third of the poem crossing the sea to reach it, it is hardly surprising that the city is found on a topographical feature either surrounded by or adjacent to water. Even if locating Mermedonia on an island would represent an innovation on the part of the Old English poet in comparison with his putative source text, it would also scarcely be surprising for the poet to modify his source material.[125] Although North and Bintley suggest that the *Andreas*-poet confused *igland*, 'island' (15a), for *ealand*, 'land by the water' (as found at line 28a), in light of Andrew's epic journey by sea, it is equally plausible that the poet intended 'island' in line 15a, and by extension in line 28a.[126] More significant, however, is the fact that Mermedonia's far-removed location, set apart from human habitation, is made explicit at this early stage of the poem: it is ***ut*** *on þæt igland*, '*out* on that island' (*And* 15a), just as the Mermedonians capture *æghwylcne ellðeodigra* / […] *þara þæt*

[122] Kenneth R. Brooks, 'Old English EA and Related Words', *English and Germanic Studies*, 5 (1952–53), 15–66 (p. 28, n. 77), and *Andreas*, ed. by Brooks, p. 62; cf. *Andrew and The Fates of the Apostles: Two Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poems*, ed. by George Philip Krapp (Boston, MA: Ginn, 1906), p. 78; but Olivier J.H. Grosz, 'The Island of Exiles: A Note on *Andreas* 15', *ELN*, 7 (1970), 241–4 (p. 242).
[123] *Andrew*, ed. by Krapp p. 78; Magennis, *Images of Community*, p. 175; Bolintineanu, 'The Land of Mermedonia', p. 153; and Brady, 'Echoes of Britons', p. 673.
[124] *Andreas*, ed. by Brooks, p. 62; *Andreas*, ed. by North and Bintley, pp. 219–20. Cf. similar confusion, also in the space of just a few lines, in *The Whale*: *ealond* (12a) and *ealonde* (21a), but *eglond* (16a).
[125] *Andreas*, ed. by Brooks, p. 62; *Andrew*, ed. by Krapp, p. 78.
[126] *Andreas*, ed. by North and Bintley, p. 220.

ealand ***utan*** *sohte*, 'all foreigners who sought that island(?) *from without* (i.e. from abroad)' (26–8).[127] It is, moreover, located in a *mearcland*, 'border-land' (19a, 802a), one which contains *mearcpaðu*, 'border-paths' (788a, cf. 1061b), and whose residents are *ælmyrce*, 'strange border-dwellers' (432a).[128] Like Guthlac, who *mearclond gesæt*, 'occupied the borderlands' (*Guth A* 174a) inhabited by demonic foes, Andrew must occupy a place in the borderlands and convert its heathen population.[129] The following discussion examines the role of this place at three crucial moments in the narrative of *Andreas*: the saint's arrival at the city after his sea voyage, the change in Andrew's fortunes just before his conversion of the Mermedonians, and the transformation of the city after the conversion.

Whilst, as noted above, earlier critics analysed the city and the events which transpire there in terms of their typological significance, Mermedonia has more recently been understood in spatial terms as a reflex of the Roman archaeological inheritance of Anglo-Saxon England, as 'a theological microcosm of the whole world, undergoing its own abbreviated history of salvation', as a place whose inhabitants are modelled not on a distant, unfamiliar nation of cannibals but on the fen-dwelling Britons of classical geographical accounts, and as 'a positively charged, and unambiguously heroic, urban space'.[130] It is difficult to deny the city's apparent *Romanitas*, its location within a broader Christian tradition of salvation, and the connotations, at least, of British fenlands, yet the presentation of Mermedonia is perhaps best understood by way of reference to the poem's inheritance from the Old English poetic tradition, in terms of both its diction and its evident parallels with *Beowulf* in particular, since, as Orchard observes, *Andreas* betrays 'innovation on the part of a poet well-versed (as it were) in a

[127] Cf. God's remarks about foreigners who travel from afar to reach Mermedonia in lines 279–82. See also Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, pp. 158–9; and Magennis, *Images of Community*, p. 175.
[128] For the meaning of this *hapax legomenon*, see *Andreas*, ed. by Brooks, pp. 76–7. Cf., however, J.R. Hall, 'Two Dark Old English Compounds: *ælmyrcan* (*Andreas* 432a) and *guðmyrce* (*Exodus* 59a)', *Journal of English Linguistics*, 20 (1987), 38–47.
[129] *Andreas*, ed. by North and Bintley, p. 218.
[130] Bintley, 'Demythologising Urban Landscapes', and *Andreas*, ed. by North and Bintley, pp. 86–93; Bolintineanu, 'The Land of Mermedonia', p. 149 (as quoted); Brady, 'Echoes of Britons'; and Garner, 'The Mermedonian Cityscape', p. 61 (as quoted), and *Structuring Spaces*, pp. 104–11.

peculiarly Anglo-Saxon traditional diction and poetic style'.[131] There is, moreover, something of the unfamiliarly familiar about the place of Mermedonia: like the Roman ruins which littered the British landscape after the end of sub-Roman Britain it is a city built of stone, yet it is home to hostile, heathen inhabitants, not to the noble, and subsequently Christian, Romans. And unlike the city depicted in *The Ruin* with its proud and wine-wanton citizens, Mermedonia stands fast, despite the depraved drinking habits of its anthropophagic inhabitants. In this way, it also resembles the mead-hall of Germanic tradition, clearly evoking such halls as Heorot, yet this city of stone is found somewhere in the East, where its citizens drink not mead, but the blood of their victims in a chillingly Grendel-esque echo.[132]

Despite Mermedonia's remote location and cannibalistic inhabitants, however, it is presented in surprisingly civilised terms.[133] Early in the poem the place is given the 'unduly positive' epithets, *folcstede gumena, / hæleða eðel*, 'a country of men, a homeland of heroes' (20b–1a), and again *folcstede* (179a), a term also used of Heorot (*Beo* 76a).[134] Matthew is said to have travelled *to þære mæran byrig*, 'to that famous city' (*And* 40b, cf. 973b), which is also referred to as a *ceaster*, 'city', throughout the poem (e.g. 41a, 207a, 281a), and its inhabitants as *burgware*, 'city-dwellers' (184a, 209b, 718b, 1094a, 1583a), and *ceasterware*, also 'city-dwellers' (1125a, 1646a). These repeated references to the *ceaster* and its *ceasterware* call to mind the *ceastra… feorran gesyne*, 'cities seen from afar', of *Maxims II* 1b, just as the frequent use of *burg-* situates *Andreas* in a kind of urban architectural space not dissimilar to that of the city of *The Ruin* (cf. *Ruin* 2a, 21a, 28a, 49), connotations which are examined further below.

[131] Orchard, 'The Originality of *Andreas*', p. 331.
[132] Irving, 'A Reading of *Andreas*', p. 219. On the significance of the Mermedonians' cannibalism, see Casteen, 'Mermedonian Cannibalism'; Hamilton, 'The Diet and Digestion'; Jonathan Wilcox, 'Eating People is Wrong: Funny Style in *Andreas* and Its Analogues', in *Anglo-Saxon Styles*, ed. by Catherine E. Karkov and George Hardin Brown (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), pp. 201–22; and Fabienne Michelet, 'Eating Bodies in the Old English *Andreas*', in *Fleshly Things and Spiritual Matters: Studies on the Medieval Body in Honour of Margaret Bridges*, ed. by Nicole Nyffenegger and Katrin Rupp (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2011), pp. 165–92.
[133] Garner, *Structuring Spaces*, pp. 105–6.
[134] *Andreas*, ed. by North and Bintley, p. 218.

North and Bintley note that both the ultimately Latin term *ceaster* (from Latin *castrum*, 'fortress'), which occurs uncommonly frequently in *Andreas*, and the Old English *burg*, 'fortified place', highlight not just the protected nature of Mermedonia, but also the probable association of it with ruined Roman settlements in Britain, such as the one depicted, of course, in *The Ruin*.[135] Mermedonia's fame, or notoriety perhaps, is further emphasised in line 209a, where it is described as *breogostol breme*, 'a famous noble principality'.[136] The renown of the city and the apparent grandeur that *ceaster* suggests—*ceaster* often describes the cities of Rome, Jerusalem, and Heaven, after all—stand in stark contrast to the abhorrent practice of its cannibalistic citizens.[137] Nonetheless, the city's heathenness is acknowledged, albeit only briefly, when God commands Andrew to go *in þas hæðenan burg*, 'to this heathen city' (*And* 111b), which is contrasted with the City of God just a handful of lines earlier (102b–4a). However, Andrew will only ever reach the heavenly city if he first fulfils his mission in the earthly city of Mermedonia.

On arriving at Mermedonia, God's angels leave Andrew and his men asleep *be herestræte*, 'by an army-road' (831b), and *burhwealle neh*, 'near the city-wall' (833b), marking the transition from the vast expanse of the sea to the urban, and militarised, landscape of Mermedonia. Andrew then slumbers until God allows the sun

scire scinan. **Sceadu sweðerodon**,
wonn under wolcnum; þa com **wederes** blæst,
hador **heofonleoma**, ofer hofu **blican**.
Onwoc þa **wiges heard**, **wang sceawode**
fore burggeatum; **beorgas steape**,
hleoðu hlifodon, **ymbe harne stan**
tigel**fag**an trafu, torras stodon,
windige weallas.

[135] *Andreas*, ed. by North and Bintley, pp. 220–1; cf. Bintley, 'Demythologising Urban Landscapes'.
[136] Cf. the opening line of *Durham*: *Is ðeos burch breome geond Breotenrice*, 'This city is famous throughout Britain' (*Dur* 1).
[137] See *DOE*, s.v. *ceaster*.

[to **shine** brightly. **The shadows disappeared**,
dark under the heavens; then came a blast of fair **weather**,
bright **heavenly radiance** **gleaming** over the buildings.
Then **the one hard in battle** awoke, **looked at the plain**
before the city-gates; **steep hills**,
slopes loomed; **around the grey stone**
stood towers, tile-**adorned** buildings,
windswept walls.] (*And* 836–43a)

Like lines 368–77a, discussed above, this short passage, which has no analogue in the *Casanatensis* (which only briefly mentions the city gate), is full of subverbal decoration. Fittingly for the significant narrative moment of Andrew's arrival in Mermedonia, almost every line here contains double alliteration, with interlinear alliteration on *w-* and *h-*, and incidental interlinear alliteration in the fourth lift on *st-* in lines 840–2. There is also paronomasia throughout the passage in the following syllables: *won-/wan-/win-*, *wol-/weal-*, *blæ-/bli-*, *heof-/hof-*, *-woc/wig-*, *hear-/har-*, *burg-/beorg-*, *hleo-/hli-*, and, through metathesis of *-r-*, *tra-/tor-*. Moreover, the shining of the sun, lifting of night's shadows, and Andrew's surveying of his surroundings on waking are all linked through alliteration on the repeated syllables *sci-* and *scea-* (836, 839b). Also striking to anyone who may also have heard or read *Beowulf*—and especially to the modern reader who can study both texts side by side—is the complete saturation in nearly every verse of this passage with Beowulfian parallels, as documented by Powell and highlighted in bold type above, many of which are unique to the two poems.[138] As Orchard has neatly put it, '[T]he *Andreas*-poet invites his sensitive audience to identify his allusions, whether reinforced by repetition, or sound-play, or word-play, or arresting coinage, or some combination thereof', features which are plainly evident in lines 836–43a.[139] Other parallels (in bold and underlined) between this passage and *Beowulf*, not included in Powell's

[138] Powell, 'Verbal Parallels', pp. 141–4, who identifies parallels with *Beowulf* lines 222b, 570b–2a, 650–1a, 886–7, 1224a, 1374a, 1413b–15a, 2553b, and 2744. Note that these parallels amount to more than individual words, however, and consist of clusters of words, phrases, etc.
[139] Orchard, 'The Originality of *Andreas*', p. 347; cf. Michael Fox, *Following the Formula in Beowulf, Örvar-Odds saga, and Tolkien* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), pp. 127–9.

discussion but identified by Michael Fox, are *hleoðu* and *windige* in *Andreas* 841a–3a and *warigeað, wulfhleoðu, windige næssas* in *Beowulf* 1358, and *beorgas steape, hleoðu hlifodon, ymbe harne stan* in *Andreas* 840b–1 and *steap stanhliðo* in *Beowulf* 1409a, though Powell did identify the parallel here with *ofer harne stan* in *Beowulf* 1415a.[140] In both *Andreas* and *Beowulf* these phrases are used in descriptions of the hero's arrival at the dwelling place of his foes, and, as will be discussed in the next chapter, the formula ‹ preposition + *harne stan* › is used, effectively, as a boundary marker throughout *Beowulf*, as indeed it is here, where it marks not just the place of Mermedonia but also a significant moment in the narrative.[141] Additionally, individual lexemes occurring in close proximity—what Powell terms a 'cluster'[142]—in the passage from *Andreas* are *Sceadu*, *heofonleoma*, *hlifodon*, and *-fagan*, which correspond to *hliuade*, *-fah*, *heofones*, and, albeit by emendation, *leoma* and *sceadwa* in *Beowulf* 1799b–1803a;[143] in both cases, the hero's awakening from sleep and the towering of buildings are described. Similarly, *scire*, *wederes*, and *hleoðu hlifodon* in the *Andreas* passage correspond to the cluster of lexemes, *hliðes, Wedera* and *scir-*, and *hlifade* in *Beowulf* 1892b–8b. However, where in *Andreas* these lexemes are used to describe Andrew's arrival in Mermedonia, in *Beowulf* they describe Beowulf's departure from Denmark, yet in both cases the heroes are standing on the shore, either having just completed or about to embark on a sea voyage.[144] Such clusters of lexemes can hardly be coincidental in light of the evident extent of borrowing from *Beowulf* elsewhere in *Andreas*.[145]

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[140] Fox, p. 124; Powell, 'Verbal Parallels', pp. 144–5. Cf. also *ymb stanhleoðo* (*And* 1233a), *ymbe stanhleoðu* (*And* 1577a), and *beorgas steape* (*And* 1306b).
[141] Garner, *Structuring Spaces*, pp. 106–7.
[142] Powell, 'Verbal Parallels', pp. 69–74, 132; Powell borrows this term from Thomas Gardner, 'How Free was the *Beowulf*-Poet?', *MP*, 71 (1973), 111–27 (esp. pp. 116–21).
[143] On this emendation, see *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 217. In fact, if the *Andreas*-poet were borrowing from this passage, such an emendation may be all the more appealing.
[144] On the so-called 'hero on the beach' motif, especially as it occurs in *Beowulf* and *Andreas*, see David Crowne, 'The Hero on the Beach: An Example of Composition by Theme in Anglo-Saxon Poetry', *NM*, 61 (1960), 362–72.
[145] These verbal echoes are not identified by Powell or Fox. If one looks to the lines surrounding the extracted passages discussed here to *Andreas* 829–46 and *Beowulf* 1785–1806 and 1888–1913, the number of such verbal echoes increases. Although they may not be quite as obvious as those parallels identified by Powell or discussed

Whilst this passage contains numerous transparent parallels with *Beowulf*, there are also echoes of other descriptions of cities elsewhere in the corpus, especially in the opening lines of *The Ruin*, discussed in Chapter 1.[146] Where *Andreas* has *burggeatum* (*And* 840a), the city described in *The Ruin* has *burgstede* and *hrungeat* (*Ruin* 2a, 4a). And although in *Andreas* the *windige weallas*, 'windswept walls' (*And* 843a), remain standing, and the sun shines *ofer hofu*, 'over the buildings' (*And* 838b), in *The Ruin* the *wealstan* (*Ruin* 1a) has succumbed to frost and to storms, and *þas hofu dreorgiað*, 'those buildings collapse' (*Ruin* 29b).[147] Similarly, as Fox points out, in *Andreas*, *tigelfagan trafu torras stodon*, 'towers stood, tile-adorned buildings' (*And* 842b), but in *The Ruin* there are *hreorge torras*, 'ruinous towers' (*Ruin* 3b), and the roof work *tigelum sceadeð*, 'sheds from the tiles' (30b); both poems additionally make reference to *harne stan*, 'grey stone' (*And* 841b; *Ruin* 43a).[148] Although shared references to architectural features should not be surprising in two descriptions of urban spaces, that there are so many shared lexemes, especially the more distinctive *tigel*, *torr*, and *har stan*, is certainly striking. As was discussed in the preceding chapter, *The Wanderer* 75–80a depicts windswept walls, also afflicted by frost and storms, though they too remain standing: *winde biwaune weallas stondaþ*, 'walls stand, battered by wind' (*Wan* 76). Moreover, both *The Ruin* and *The Wanderer* likewise describe ruined settlements as (*eald*) *enta geweorc*, '(old) work of giants' (*Ruin* 2b, *Wan* 87a), a phrase also found twice in *Andreas*: *enta ærgeweorc* and *eald enta geweorc*, 'old work of giants' (*And* 1235a, 1495a), discussed below. Mermedonia, then, despite still being intact, is described in terms which nonetheless situate it within this wider tradition of what might be called the ruined city *topos*, if only to subvert that tradition by depicting what is—for now at least—an intact city. It is not, then, the physical structures which make

immediately above, their cumulative weight leaves the strong impression that the *Andreas*-poet had a copy of *Beowulf* in front of him.

[146] Bintley, 'Demythologising Urban Landscapes', p. 115.

[147] Note *Maxims I* 53: *Weallas him wiþre healdað, him biþ wind gemæne*, 'Walls hold out against them [waves], wind is common to them both'.

[148] Fox, p. 129.

Mermedonia ruinous, but rather the moral failings of its heathen inhabitants. The dubious moral standing of the Mermedonians evokes the biblical tradition of the citizens of Babel, Sodom and Gomorrah who similarly confound God's will with their sinful practices.

Like these cities, Mermedonia too is an ancient place. The formula *enta geweorc* first occurs in *Andreas* when, having been captured by the Mermedonians, Andrew is led out of the city, where

> drogon deormode æfter dunscræfum
> ymb **stanhleoðo** stærcedferþþe
> efne swa wide swa wegas tolagon,
> **enta ærgeweorc**, innan burgum,
> **stræte stanfage**. Storm upp aras
> æfter ceasterhofum…
>
> [bold-minded men, hard-hearted ones,
> dragged [him] past **mountain caves**, around stone cliffs,
> just as far as the roads extended,
> **the old work of giants**, from within the cit[y],
> **stone-paved streets**. A storm rose up
> over the city-buildings…] (*And* 1233–7a)

In addition to the mention of *stanhleoðo* (cf. *Beo* 1409a) and the description of the roads as *enta ærgeweorc* (cf. *Beo* 1679a), there is a unique parallel with *Beowulf* in this passage: *stræte stanfage*, 'stone-paved streets' (*And* 1236a), corresponding to *stræt wæs stanfah*, 'the street was stone-paved' (*Beo* 320a).[149] However, where in *Beowulf* this half-line memorably occurs in the description of Beowulf's first approach to Heorot after arriving in Denmark, in *Andreas* it describes Andrew's initial removal from the city of Mermedonia, demonstrating yet again the *Andreas*-poet's tendency to use Beowulfian expressions pertaining to the built environment in a novel, or even inverted, context. Although the poet does not dwell on Mermedonia itself here, the city nonetheless looms large over the scene—the roads extend *innan burgum*, 'from

[149] Powell, 'Verbal Parallels', pp. 146–8.

within the city (or fortifications)' (*And* 1235b). Like the wind which sweeps the walls in *Andreas* 836–43a, the storm mentioned here is not a cause of architectural destruction, but an instance of pathetic fallacy, appearing in anticipation of the suffering shortly to be inflicted on Andrew, an effect most noticeable in the description of wintry weather shortly after this in lines 1253–65a.[150] A few hundred lines later, having endured further torments at the hands of the Mermedonians, Andrew looks upon the pillars along the wall of his prison:

> **He be wealle geseah** wundrum **fæste**
> under sælwage sweras unlytle,
> **stapulas** standan storme bedrifene,
> **eald enta geweorc**…
>
> [**By the wall he saw** great pillars
> wondrously **fixed** along the building-wall,
> **columns** standing, beaten by storm[s],
> **the old work of giants**…] (*And* 1492–5a)

As discussed above, the association of architectural features with storms in both of these passages is reminiscent of similar associations in *The Ruin* and *The Wanderer*,[151] not least because of the mention in each case of (*eald*) *enta geweorc*. This second passage in particular, though, has a number of other direct parallels with *Beowulf*, especially lines 2715b–19, which describe Beowulf's final moments in the dragon's mound, seemingly another ruined construction erected but no longer used by humans.[152] However, where Beowulf's reflections on his dilapidated surroundings are prompted by his own demise and attendant recognition of the transience of all earthly things, Andrew's observations mark a turning point in his fortunes as only three lines later he commands one of the pillars to unleash the flood which will

[150] Magennis, *Images of Community*, pp. 177–8.
[151] *Andreas*, ed. by Brooks, p. 113.
[152] Powell, 'Verbal Parallels', pp. 139–41. Cf. *Beo* 2542–9. On the 'hero by the wall' motif in these passages, see Anlezark, *Water and Fire*, pp. 351–4. This passage in *Beowulf* is discussed further in Chapter 4.

overwhelm the Mermedonians and free him from his captivity.[153] Indeed, Anlezark suggests that the description of this *eald enta geweorc* as *storme bedrifene*, 'beaten by storm[s]', is itself evocative of the destruction of the giants by the Flood in Genesis, situating Mermedonia within the wider Christian salvation history.[154] Moreover, the echoes in these passages of the ruined city *topos* are subverted insofar as the interior pillars not only emerge from the flood completely unscathed by the water and the storms which have (improbably) battered them, but, thanks to Andrew's intervention, the place of Mermedonia undergoes a radical transformation just as the Mermedonians themselves are converted.

Indeed, the expression which marks this transformation most clearly is one already encountered earlier in this chapter. After Andrew's release by the Mermedonians, the flood waters subside, and the poem states, *Smeolt wæs se sigewang*, 'The victory-plain was tranquil' (*And* 1581a). Just as this very line signals Guthlac's triumph at the *beorg* and his salvation in *Guthlac A* 742a, here it proclaims Andrew's success as the flood waters subside and Mermedonia is washed clean of its inhabitants' sins.[155] After the flood has passed, the Mermedonians turn to Andrew, who instructs them *ciricean getimbran, / gerwan godes tempel*, 'to build a church, to make ready God's temple' (*And* 1633b–4a), on the site where the flood sprang forth and the fourteen most wicked warriors in the city arose after death.[156] Not only does the construction of a church at the place where the Mermedonians' conversion took place quite literally cement their future as a Christian people, but it also marks the transformation, as many critics have observed, of the city of Mermedonia itself.[157] After the conversion,

[153] Anlezark, *Water and Fire*, p. 353. As noted in *Andreas*, ed. by Brooks, p. 113, this passage omits any mention of the statue found in the corresponding parts of the *Casanatensis* and the Old English prose *Life*. On which, see also Irving, 'A Reading of *Andreas*', pp. 225–7; and *Andreas*, ed. by North and Bintley, pp. 294–5.
[154] Anlezark, *Water and Fire*, p. 215.
[155] For other parallels between *Andreas* and *Guthlac A*, see Orchard, 'The Originality of *Andreas*', pp. 362–5.
[156] Cf. the unique parallel with *Ele* 1021a: *girwan godes tempel*. As pointed out in *Andreas*, ed. by North and Bintley, pp. 301–2, in the *Praxeis* and *Casanatensis*, the church is explicitly said to have been built on the site where the prison had been and where the pillar stood.
[157] Bintley, 'Demythologising Urban Landscapes', p. 117; Bolintineanu, 'The Land of Mermedonia', p. 160; Clemoes, *Interactions of Thought*, p. 271; Garner, 'The Mermedonian Cityscape', p. 61, and *Structuring Spaces*, pp.109–10; and Magennis, *Images of Community*, pp. 174–5.

Mermedonia is described variously as *þa winburg*, 'the wine-city' (1642a, cf. 1672a), *þære beorhtan byrig*, 'that bright city' (1649a), *þa goldburg*, 'the gold-city' (1655a), which is filled with *secga seledream ond sincgestreon, / beorht beagselu*, 'the hall-joys of men and treasure, bright (arm-)ring-halls' (1656–7a), and *salu sinchroden*, 'treasure-adorned halls' (1673a); finally, it is called *þa wederburg*, 'the fair-weather city' (1697a), in contrast with the storm-battered buildings already discussed above.[158] In this way, the city becomes, in Magennis's words, 'a place of admirable community' to the extent that it even 'reflect[s] some of the attributes of the heavenly city'.[159] In other words, the locus of antithetical human interaction is turned into functional human social space and, what is more, into an emphatically Christian place. However, the image presented here contrasts with that found earlier in the poem when the Mermedonians' plans to eat the youth offered up by his father are thwarted: *Hornsalu wunedon, / weste winræced*, 'Gabled halls remained, the wine-halls deserted' (*And* 1158b–9a).[160] Deprived of their meal, the Mermedonians' places of eating and drinking are rendered useless.[161] Nonetheless, just as Mermedonia is described, like Heorot, as *folcstede* earlier in the poem, many of these epithets for the city and its halls are also reminiscent of, or indeed the same as, those used of Heorot, which were discussed in Chapter 1: *winærn* (*Beo* 654a), *winreced* (714b, 993b), and *winsele* (695a, 771b), all meaning 'wine-hall'; *goldsele*, 'gold-hall' (715a, 1253a, 1639a, and 2083a); *beahsele*, '(arm-)ring hall' (1177a); and *hornreced*, 'horn-hall' (704a). Heorot is also described as *beorht*, 'bright' (997a, 1177a), just as the city in *The Ruin* is said to have once been *beorhtan burg*, 'a bright city' (*Ruin* 37a), containing *beorht* […] *burgræced*, 'bright city-dwellings' (21a). There are further Beowulfian echoes in *Andreas* 1656 (*secga seledream ond sincgestreon*), since *sincgestreon* only occurs elsewhere in *Beowulf* lines

[158] For this meaning of *wederburg*, see *Andreas*, ed. by Brooks, p. 118.
[159] Magennis, *Images of Community*, pp. 174–5.
[160] Cf. descriptions of the prison as *þæt dimme ræced*, 'that dim hall' (*And* 1308b, cf. 1270a: *to þære dimman ding*), *wic unsyfre*, 'an unclean place' (1310b), *sele*, 'hall, dwelling' (1311b), and later as *hlinræced*, 'barred hall' (1463a).
[161] *Andreas*, ed. by North and Bintley, pp. 274–5.

1092b and 1226a,[162] and the words *eorlgestreona*, 'men's treasures' (*Beo* 2244b), and *seledreamas*, 'hall-joys' (2252a) are both uttered by the 'Last Survivor' as he consigns what will become the dragon's treasure hoard to the earth, as discussed in the next chapter. Hall-joys and hoards of wealth are also, of course, typical features of Heorot. Whilst these verbal echoes not only strongly suggest that the *Andreas*-poet had Heorot in mind when he described the transformed city of Mermedonia, they demonstrate the extent to which the structure in the second half of the poem is undergirded by depictions of the city. The moment of Andrew's victory and the conversion of the Mermedonians is simultaneously marked by the transformation of place, showing once again that, like Heorot and the city in *The Ruin*, place is not immutable, and is even capable of being reinvented and, in this case, redeemed. In contrast to those places discussed in earlier chapters, which are subject to the ravages of time, the positive changes to Mermedonia, like those to Guthlac's *beorg*, give the place a new lease of life. Despite Mermedonia's many connotations with ruined Roman settlements and despite Guthlac's preoccupation with obtaining his seat in Heaven, place in *Andreas* and *Guthlac A* is less about transience than it is about transformation.

Conclusion

Space and especially place are clearly central concepts in both *Guthlac A* and *Andreas*, yet each poem treats these phenomena in discernibly different ways. In keeping with the Antonine tradition of the eremitic life, Guthlac's hermitage is to be found somewhere out in the unmarked, homogeneous space of the desert. Although it is a far cry from the Egyptian desert inhabited by Anthony, the desert of *Guthlac A* is pointedly not the wilderness of the Lincolnshire fens described in Felix's *Vita sancti Guthlaci*. Crucially, this *westen*, or *anad*,

[162] Powell, 'Verbal Parallels', pp. 120, n. 99, 164–5.

serves to separate Guthlac from human society and to demarcate the bounds of his new dwelling place atop the *beorg*. By occupying a place within this spatial container, Guthlac exchanges the enclosure of the monastery for that of the hermit's desert, or cenobitic for eremitic space. In *Andreas*, however, the vast space of the sea takes on a rather more active role than Guthlac's desert does: in order to reach Mermedonia, Andrew must first traverse the considerable expanse of the sea and overcome its violent waters in order to reach his faraway destination of Mermedonia. This spatial region is less a container than it is an obstacle to be surmounted, but it is a space which is also symbolic of the *lifes weg*, along which Andrew must demonstrate his faith in God.

The site of spiritual struggle in *Guthlac A*, however, is the place of the *beorg*, where Guthlac must overthrow its demonic inhabitants in order to achieve salvation. In ridding the *beorg* of these demons, Guthlac converts it into a holy, Christian place, fit for the hermit who seeks to bring himself closer to God. To signal this conversion, the poem concludes with a description of Guthlac's dwelling place as a *locus amoenus*, alluding to the Anglo-Saxon conceptualisation of the 'interim paradise', and pointing ahead to Guthlac's ascension into Heaven itself, creating a link between the earthly and heavenly habitations. And whilst Mermedonia undergoes a similar transformation upon Andrew's conversion of the city's inhabitants—as highlighted by the shared half-line, *smeolt wæs se sigewong*—this settlement is situated, unsurprisingly, in the same tradition of urban places already encountered in the preceding chapters of this thesis. Though there are hints of the ruined city *topos* also found in *The Ruin* and *The Wanderer*, in its diction *Andreas* is clearly most heavily and directly indebted to *Beowulf* for its descriptions of Mermedonia. Crucially, the action of *Andreas* is rooted in Mermedonia to the extent that place becomes a fundamental structural element in the second half of the narrative. Places in the Old English poetic tradition can, then, be converted and made fit for habitation and worship, whilst others, as the next chapter will show, must be

cleansed of their inimical, monstrous inhabitants in order to restore the natural order of things—no more so, of course, than in *Beowulf*.

Chapter 4
Inverted Places: Monstrous Dwellings in *Beowulf*

Þyrs sceal on fenne gewunian
ana innan lande
'An ogre must dwell in the fen
alone in the land'
—*Maxims II* 42b–3a

Draca sceal on hlæwe,
frod, frætwum wlanc
'A dragon must be in a mound,
wise, proud of its treasures'
—*Maxims II* 26b–7a

In his monster-slaying feats Beowulf has something in common with the hero-saints of *Guthlac A* and *Andreas*, just as the adversaries that Beowulf encounters share certain characteristics with the foes of Guthlac and Andrew. Grendel and his mother, descendants of the exiled, desert-dwelling Cain and residents of the moors and mere beyond Heorot, resemble to some extent the demonic inhabitants of Guthlac's desert and his hilltop dwelling. Similarly, with their penchant for human sacrifice and perverted feasting rituals, the Mermedonians converted, and in some cases slain, by Andrew bear some resemblance to Grendel and his mother with their own fondness for human blood. However, the presentation of the place which Grendel and his mother inhabit—their lair beneath the waters of a monster-infested mere—is much richer and much more developed than either Guthlac's *beorg* or even the city of Mermedonia. Arguably as important as Heorot itself, the mere is one of the most strikingly described things in all of Old English literature, and is surely the most memorable of any of the places considered in this thesis—not just to the modern reader but, as the analysis below will demonstrate, to the Anglo-Saxon audience of *Beowulf*. The dwelling of the poem's final and most fearsome foe, however, is in many ways a rather more ambiguous location. The dragon which goes on to slay Beowulf

finds its lair ready-prepared, a manmade barrow containing a hoard of treasure. With its allusions to Britain's Roman heritage, and the elegiac address to the mound's treasure by the Last Survivor who entombs the treasure there, this place is a monument not simply to the past, but a solemn reminder that everything will pass. As *Beowulf* draws to a close, the hero's own burial mound also participates in this discourse on transience, one which serves to undermine the notion that the hall, the centre of human social space, symbolises longevity and security.

This final chapter, then, will examine each of the other main places, besides Heorot, encountered in the central narrative of *Beowulf*. However, each of the places investigated in this chapter relates in some way to Heorot, whether through verbal parallels with the hall, characteristics in common, or a shared thematic significance. This is hardly surprising since Heorot is the first place encountered in the poem, and is thus the spatial lens through which all other places in *Beowulf* are viewed. After demonstrating how Grendel relates to the unbounded space of the moors and fens beyond Heorot, the discussion will turn firstly to the mere of Grendel's mother and then to her underwater dwelling, or *niðsele*, 'hostile hall'. It will then be shown how the mere and lair of Grendel's mother constitute an inversion of the *locus amoenus*, or rather a *locus terribilis* (defined below). The final pair of places to be considered are the dragon's barrow, with its ancient architectural features and unsettling similarities with Heorot, and Beowulf's own burial mound, the poem's final statement on place, and one which underscores its preoccupation with transience, as in nearly all of the places considered in this thesis.

Controlling space: Grendel and the moors

In her discussion of the 'natural world' in Old English poetry, Jennifer Neville views Grendel and his mother as 'agents of destruction', who bring the hostility of the outside world into the

safety of the hall. Their inhabitation of the space surrounding Heorot circumscribes the hall and the society for which it is a metonym. Insofar as Grendel might be viewed, along with his mother, as a proxy for the wider natural world, Neville comments that the natural world in *Beowulf* is perhaps, rather,

> *unnatural* to human tastes – unfamiliar, uncanny and unfriendly. As a result natural phenomena and monsters existed side by side in a tradition that characterised them both as fundamentally hostile to the human race. This is not to say that Grendel is not 'monstrous', but that the 'monstrous' is not opposed to the 'natural'.[1]

Viewed in this way, the natural world—as it figures in *Beowulf*, at least—is perhaps best understood both in terms of the direct danger which it poses to human society and as a force which creates and maintains the physical limits of human society. Grendel in particular and his mother to a slightly lesser extent are a binding force in *Beowulf*: in sustaining the division between human society and the natural world that they stalk beyond it, they confine that society to a particular place: Heorot. As Neville puts it, '[Grendel] is a *mearcstapa* "boundary-walker" (*Beo* 103a); he not only lurks on the other side of the boundaries that divide the human race from the natural world, but the fact of his lurking there establishes those boundaries'.[2] Grendel's roaming of the marches is fitting for one who, in a distinctly elegiac idiom, *wræclastas træd*, 'walked the exile-paths' (1352b), a reference to Grendel's descent from Cain, the first exile from human company.[3] However, whilst the place of Heorot is delimited by the

[1] Neville, pp. 70–74, at 71 (emphasis original). Neville concludes that 'monsters, the worst, the most ungovernable and intractable of all forces, are a part of what we would now call the natural world' (p. 72). Other studies of the landscape and natural world in *Beowulf* include Walter J. Sedgefield, 'The Scenery in *Beowulf*', *JEGP*, 35 (1936), 161–69; Ervene F. Gulley, 'The Concept of Nature in *Beowulf*', *Thoth*, 11 (1970), 16–30; Margaret Gelling, 'The Landscape of *Beowulf*', *ASE*, 31 (2002), 7–11; and, most recently, Paul Langeslag, 'Monstrous Landscape in *Beowulf*', *ES*, 96, 2 (2015), 119–38. For recent assessments of Grendel and his mother's monstrosity, see Megan Cavell, 'Constructing the Monstrous Body in *Beowulf*', *ASE*, 43 (2014), 155–81; and Tim Flight, *Basilisks and Beowulf: Monsters in the Anglo-Saxon World* (London: Reaktion Books, 2021), pp. 178–93.

[2] Neville, p. 74.

[3] On Grendel's descent from Cain, see Joseph L. Baird, 'Grendel the Exile', *NM*, 67 (1966), 375–81; Stephen C. Bandy, 'Cain, Grendel, and the Giants of *Beowulf*', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 9 (1973), 235–49; Thalia Phillies Feldman, 'Grendel and Cain's Descendants', *Literary Onomastics Studies*, 8 (1981), 71–87;

space of the marches roamed by Grendel, the hall is certainly not the only definable place in this part of Denmark: Grendel and his mother occupy their own clearly defined place within the marches themselves, what William Lawrence called 'the haunted mere'.[4] However, the mere is principally the domain of Grendel's mother, whilst Grendel is more strongly associated with the marches designated by his epithet *mearcstapa*.

In Grendel's memorable entrance into the poem (lines 86–144) he is described, not only as a *mearcstapa*, but as

> mære mearcstapa se þe moras heold
> fen ond fæsten; fifelcynnes eard
> wonsæli wer weardode hwile
>
> [a famous march-stepper who held the moors,
> fen and fastnesses; the miserable man
> inhabited the (?water-)monster-race's dwelling for some time] (*Beo* 103–5)

Both Grendel and his mother's dwelling place and the wider space where Grendel roams are alluded to in these lines. The presumed referent of *fifelcynnes eard*, 'the (?water-)monster-race's dwelling' (104b), is the mere in which Grendel and his mother reside, discussed further below.[5] Of particular interest here are the *moras… fen ond fæsten*, 'moors, fen and fastnesses', which Grendel rules over. Presiding over the moors and fens around Heorot, Grendel, who is himself described as a *þyrs*, 'ogre, giant' (426a), resembles his gnomic counterpart in *Maxims II*: *Þyrs sceal on fenne gewunian / ana innan lande*, 'An ogre must dwell in the fen, alone in the land' (*Max II* 42b–3a).[6] Where the two differ, however, is that the *þyrs* of *Maxims II* lives

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Niilo Peltola, 'Grendel's Descent from Cain Reconsidered', *NM*, 73 (1972), 284–91; and especially Ruth Mellinkoff, 'Cain's Monstrous Progeny in *Beowulf*: Part I, Noachic Tradition', *ASE*, 8 (1979), 143–62, and 'Cain's Monstrous Progeny in *Beowulf*: Part II, Post-Diluvian Survival', *ASE*, 9 (1981), 183–97.

[4] William W. Lawrence, 'The Haunted Mere in *Beowulf*', *PMLA*, 27, 2 (1912), 208–45.

[5] Note that *fifel-* is used elsewhere as a term for the sea or ocean in compound words, e.g. *fifeldeor* (*Widsith*, 43) and *fifelstream* (*Metres of Boethius*, 26), as noted by Lapidge, 'Psychology of Terror', p. 379, n. 16. Note as well the parallel between *fen ond fæsten* here and *of þæm fenne 7 of ðæm fæstene* in ch. 27 of *The Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*, ed. by Andy Orchard in his *Pride and Prodigies*, p. 242.

[6] Grendel is also associated with *eotenas ond ylfe ond orcneas, / swylce gigantas*, 'ettins and elves and evil spirits, and likewise giants' (112–13a). What precisely these beings were, though, is unclear.

alone, whilst Grendel, it subsequently transpires, does not. The assonance associating Grendel's epithet ***mær**e **mear**cstapa* with the space of the ***mor**as… fen ond fæsten* is also used of Grendel and his mother together in line 1348: *micle **mear**cstapan **mor**as healdan*, 'great march-steppers holding the moors'. Earlier in the poem, similar paronomasia is employed when Beowulf remarks how Grendel will eat *un**mur**nlice, / **mear**cað **mor**hopu*, 'without remorse, mark the marsh-pools [with blood]' (449b–50a).[7] Moreover, Grendel's mother is given the epithet *mihtig **mer**ewif*, 'mighty mere-woman' (*Beo* 1519a), which characterises her in terms of the place where she resides, and in which the element ***mer**e* participates in the same pattern of assonance. In his recent study of 'monstrous landscapes' in *Beowulf*, Paul Langeslag observes that '[l]andscape is a crucial element in the characterization of the adversaries in *Beowulf*. In fact, the poet associates his monsters with their habitats to such a degree that landscape becomes part of their very identities'.[8] Indeed, this point seems to be foregrounded whenever Grendel and his mother appear in the poem. Grendel's ties with the *moras* are also restated in the description of his approach to Heorot: *Ða com of more under misthleoþum / Grendel gongan*, 'Then, under misty slopes, came Grendel walking *from the moor*' (710a).[9] This association is also reinforced immediately before the second description of the mere, when, in an inversion of Grendel's approach to Heorot, Hrothgar, Beowulf and their men follow Grendel's mother's tracks *ofer **myr**can **mor***, 'over the dark moor' (1405a). Quite what the intended referent of *mor* might have been, though, is not certain. In charters, where it is a common word, it typically designates wet, uncultivated areas, whereas in a variety of prose texts and in the poetic corpus, it tends only to mean 'mountain'. This point notwithstanding, Langeslag suggests that the variation in *moras…, fen ond fæsten* would indicate that *moras* and

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[7] Orchard, *Critical Companion*, 213. On the element *hop* in *morhopu*, see Gelling, pp. 9–10.
[8] Langeslag, p. 120.
[9] Lapidge, 'Psychology of Terror', p. 383. See also *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 158; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 78, 189–94, and *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 34–37; and especially Stanley, 'Notes on Old English Poetry', pp. 327–9.

fen are to be understood as synonymous in *Beowulf*. The apposition with *fen* would seem to confirm the common interpretation of *moras* as wet, lowland moors as opposed to elevated heathland.[10] In addition, Orchard notes the 'bewildering number of terms' used in lines 103–5 to refer to Grendel and his mother's domain and dwelling-place (*mearc-*, *moras*, *fen*, *fæsten*, and *fifelcynnes eard*), 'which have as their common feature their remoteness from human habitation'.[11] This remoteness emphasises the considerable difference, and distance, between the central human place of Heorot and the expansive, if ill-defined space of the *moras…, fen ond fæsten*, which encircle and confine Heorot—in other words, between civilisation and uncultivated space.[12] In this way, the moors function in much the same way as the sea in *The Wanderer* or the desert in *Guthlac A*, that is as a spatial container. Just as the adverse conditions of the sea afflict the Wanderer, and just as the desert is home to demons hostile to Guthlac, so too do the marches, moors and fens around Heorot pose an existential threat to its inhabitants and to King Hrothgar's power.

Inverting place: the mere of Grendel's mother

Indeed, Hrothgar recognises this threat to his power and his people all too keenly. Hrothgar's description of Grendel and his mother's mere (lines 1357b–76a) is one of the best-known 'set-pieces' in *Beowulf*, and one of the most distinctive evocations of the natural world in the Old

[10] Langeslag, pp. 122–3. On this distinction, see also Rackham, *History of the Countryside*, pp. 305–27, esp. 305–10; and *OED*, s.v. 'moor', n. sense 1: 'Originally: a marsh; marshland, fen (*obsolete*)'. The shared etymology of *mor* and *mere* might also corroborate such an interpretation, for which see Orel, pp. 274, 261 (s.v. **mōriz/*mōraz* and **mariz*, respectively). A definite example (albeit in prose) where *moras* designates wet, lowland moors is in the Old English *Life of St Guthlac*, in which *Þær synd unmætre moras, hwilon sweart wætersteal, 7 hwilon fule eariþas yrnende*, 'There are immense moors, now black standing water, now foul, running water-streams' (translating Felix's *Vita S. Guthlaci*: *nunc stagnis, nunc flactris, interdum nigris fusi vaporis lactibus* […] *longissimo tractu protenditur*, 'It is a very long tract, now consisting of marshes, now of bogs, sometimes of black waters overhung by fog'); see Roberts, 'Guthlac: An Edition', p. 262; and *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave, pp. 86–7.
[11] Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, p. 59.
[12] Cf. Isidore's definition of *desertum*, discussed in the previous chapter.

English poetic corpus. Precisely what the Old English noun *mere* denotes in this context, however, is not necessarily clear, since the word has, in poetry and prose, a range of meanings: 'sea', 'mere', 'lake', and 'pool'.[13] Critics initially argued that in *Beowulf* the word designated the sea, an inlet of the sea, or some other large land-locked body of water.[14] However, following Frederick Klaeber, Fulk has argued that such interpretations are unlikely and that 'mere' or 'pool' would be more fitting, not least in light of the place-name *Grendles mere* found in charters for inland places in Wiltshire and Worcestershire.[15] Roberta Frank has suggested that the apparent ambiguity of the word may even have been deliberate.[16] Despite disagreement about the precise nature of the *mere*, early critics of this passage lauded it for its descriptive power, and the fact that this description concerns part of the 'natural world' additionally gave rise to a debate concerning the naturalism, or rather the supposed lack of it, in the passage.[17] Early commentators were also struck by apparent parallels with Chapter 66 of the late fourteenth-century Old Norse *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*.[18] Following Lawrence, a number of scholars turned to the parallel of the *fors*, 'waterfall', of Eyjardalsá in *Grettis saga* in order to smooth out the apparent inconsistencies of the mere passage of *Beowulf* and to account for

[13] Bosworth–Toller, s.v. *mere*; *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 412; and Orel, p. 261 (s.v. **mariz*).
[14] For summaries, see Roberta Frank, '"Mere" and "Sund": Two Sea-Changes in *Beowulf*', in *Modes of Interpretation in Old English Literature: Essays in Honour of Stanley B. Greenfield*, ed. by Phyllis R. Brown, Georgia R. Crampton and Fred C. Robinson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), pp. 153–72 (pp. 154–8); and R.D. Fulk, 'Some Lexical Problems in the Interpretation and Textual Criticism of *Beowulf* (Verses 414a, 845b, 986a, 1320a, 1375a)', *SN*, 77 (2005), 145–55 (p. 147). For more general discussion, see also Caroline Brady, 'Synonyms for "Sea" in *Beowulf*', in *Studies in Honor of Albert Morey Sturtevant*, no ed. given, University of Kansas Publications: Humanistic Studies, 29 (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1952), pp. 22–46; and Mattias Jacobson, *Wells, Meres, and Pools: Hydronomic Terms in the Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Studia Anglistica Upsaliensa, 98 (Uppsala: Reklam & Katalogtryck AB, 1997).
[15] Fulk, 'Some Lexical Problems', p. 147. For a list of charter clauses containing place-names which refer to Grendel, see Semple, *Perceptions of the Prehistoric*, pp. 172, 261, and references there.
[16] Frank, pp. 154–8.
[17] For an example of such laudatory comments, see Lawrence, 'The Haunted Mere', p. 245, in which he calls the mere description '[o]ne of the finest passages in the poem, possibly the finest single piece of description in Anglo-Saxon verse'.
[18] For the relevant passage, see *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, ed. by Guðni Jónsson, Íslenzk Fornrit, 7 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1936), pp. 214–17. On the dating of the saga, see Örnólfur Thorsson, 'Grettir sterki og Sturla lögmaðr', in *Samtíðarsögur: The Contemporary Sagas, Forprent: Preprints of the 9th International Saga Conference, Akureyri, 31 July – 6 August 1994*, ed. by Sverrir Tómasson, 2 vols (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1994), II, pp. 907–33; cf., however, *Grettis saga*, ed. by Guðni Jónsson, pp. lxviii–lxx, who proposes c. 1310–c. 1320.

the *fyrgenstream*—literally 'mountain-stream'—as 'waterfall'. Magnús Fjalldal provides a comprehensive overview and a convincing refutation of this early view, as promulgated most prominently by Lawrence, R.W. Chambers, and to a lesser extent Klaeber.[19] The desire to find a particular, identifiable landscape in this passage reflected a modern urge for textual consistency, something, it should perhaps go without saying, that one cannot demand from Old English or any other pre-modern literature.[20] Instead, as Fjalldal suggests, 'A less heavy-handed approach might be to accept the contradictions in the scenery of the mere and to allow for the possibility that the author of *Beowulf* set out to create a certain kind of mood rather than realistic scenery'.[21] It is the creation of this 'certain kind of mood'—and the creation, therefore, of a particular place—to which the discussion now turns.

Anticipating Fjalldal's suggestion, Richard Butts called the mere 'an extended metaphor for terror' and commented that the poet's purpose was 'less to describe a particular topography than it [was] to communicate some sense of men's imaginative and psychological response to Grendel'.[22] Similarly, Jennifer Neville maintains that the landscape of Grendel and

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[19] Magnús Fjalldal, *The Long Arm of Coincidence: The Frustrated Connection between Beowulf and Grettis saga* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1998), pp. 67–78 (esp. 68–71); cf. William S. Mackie, 'The Demon's Home in *Beowulf*', *JEGP*, 37 (1938), 455–61 (p. 456). For this early view, see especially Lawrence, 'The Haunted Mere', and *Beowulf and Epic Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), pp. 184–5; R.W. Chambers, *Beowulf: An Introduction to the Study of the Poem, with a Discussion of the Stories of Offa and Finn*, suppl. by C.L. Wrenn, 3rd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), p. 464; and Klaeber's commentary and gloss of *fyrgenstream* as '*waterfall* (? […])' in his first three editions of *Beowulf*, e.g. *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. by Frederick Klaeber, 3rd edn (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1950), pp. 183, 337; cf., however, the revised fourth edition, *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 201. For other insightful treatments of the relationship (if any) between *Beowulf* and *Grettis saga* (as well as other proposed analogues and sources), see Theodore M. Andersson, 'Sources and Analogues', in *A Beowulf Handbook*, ed. by Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997), pp. 125–48; and Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 140–68.

[20] Richard Butts, 'The Analogical Mere: Landscape and Terror in *Beowulf*', *ES*, 68 (1987), 113–21 (p. 113). Bruce Mitchell, '"Until the Dragon Comes…" Some Thoughts on *Beowulf*', *Neophilologus*, 47 (1963), 126–38 (p. 136), makes this same point when he asks rhetorically, '[C]an we (even when we know the conventions in which he is writing) demand of a poet that he gives us a crystal-clear message readily understood by all on first reading?'

[21] Fjalldal, p. 73. This is a view which first seems to have been put forward by James R. Hulbert, 'A Note on the Psychology of the *Beowulf* Poet', in *Studies in English Philology: A Miscellany in Honor of Frederick Klaeber*, ed. by Kemp Malone and Martin B. Ruud (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1929), pp. 189–95 (at 193–4). See similar comments by Dale, p. 33; Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, p. 143; and *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 200.

[22] Butts, p. 113. See also Arthur G. Brodeur, *The Art of Beowulf* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1959), pp. 88–106; Nicholas Howe, 'The Landscape of Anglo-Saxon England: Inherited, Invented, Imagined', in *Inventing Medieval Landscapes: Senses of Place in Western Europe*, ed. by John Howe and Michael Wolfe

his mother's mere 'is inextricably involved with its inhabitants, and the fear it inspires depends on who is lurking in it', and *vice versa*, one might add.[23] One can only hope to understand fully the threat that Grendel and his mother pose to human society by also recognising the intrinsic hostility of the place that they inhabit, as described first by Hrothgar in his speech addressed to Beowulf in lines 1322–82:

Hie dygel lond
warigeað, wulfhleoþu, windige næssas,
frecne fengelad, ðær fyrgenstream
under næssa genipu niþer gewiteð,
flod under foldan. Nis þæt feor heonon
milgemearces þæt se mere standeð;
ofer þæm hongiað hrinde bearwas,
wudu wyrtum fæst wæter oferhelmað.
Þær mæg nihta gehwæm niðwundor seon,
fyr on flode. No þæs frod leofað
gumena bearna, þæt þone grund wite.
Ðeah þe hæðstapa hundum geswenced,
heorot hornum trum, holtwudu sece,
feorran geflymed, ær he feorh seleð,
aldor on ofre, ær he in wille
hafelan *hydan*;[24] nis þæt heoru stow.
Þonon yðgeblond up astigeð
won to wolcnum, þonne wind styreþ,
lað gewidru, oðþæt lyft *ð*rysmaþ,[25]
roderas reotað.

(Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2002), pp. 107–8; Lapidge, 'Psychology of Terror'; and Alan Renoir, 'Point of View'.

[23] Neville, p. 135.

[24] Following Klaeber, the editors of the revised *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 48, retain the non-alliterating *beorgan*, 'to save', but most editors (following Kemble) opt for *hȳdan*, 'to hide', in order to provide the double alliteration found in the preceding three lines (discussed below). There is also precedent for this reading—but not for *beorgan*—elsewhere in the poem at line 446a (*hafalan hydan*), as Kemble originally observed. Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 47–8, however, proposes *helan*, 'to hide', which both preserves the alliteration and assonates with *hafelan*, and could easily have been omitted through *homoeoteleuton* with the graphemically similar *hafelan*. This reading was earlier proposed by Johan Gerritsen, 'Emending *Beowulf* 2253 – Some Matters of Principle, with a Supplement on 389 – 90, 1372 & 240', *Neophilologus*, 73 (1989), 448–52 (pp. 451–2); and Alfred Bammesberger, 'Five *Beowulf* Notes', in *Words, Texts and Manuscripts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture Presented to Helmet Gneuss on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. by Michael Korhammer (Cambridge: Brewer, 1992), pp. 239–55, at 250–2. However, as recently noted by Thijs Porck and Berber Bossenbroek, 'A Hart with Its Head Held High: A New Emendation for *Beowulf*, Line 1372a', *ANQ*, 33 (2020), 4–8, *helan* can be rejected on metrical grounds since it would undergo resolution in this position. Note that, metrically sound though Porck and Bossenbroek's emendation may be (*hafelan hafene*), the semantic grounds on which the emendation rests are informed by the problematic modern urge to read this passage naturalistically.

[25] On the emendation from MS *drysmaþ* to *ðrysmaþ* (< *þrysman*, 'to stifle, to choke', a 1st-class transitive weak verb), see Fulk, 'Some Lexical Problems', pp. 150–1.

[They inhabit a hidden land,
wolf-slopes, windy headlands,
dangerous fen-paths, where a mountain-stream
plunges down into the headlands' mists,
water under the earth. It is not far from here,
in miles, that the mere stands;
over it hang frost-covered groves,
a wood, fixed with roots, overshadows the water.
There, every night, one may see an evil wonder:
fire on (or 'in') the water. There is no-one so wise
amongst the sons of men who knows the bottom [of it].
Though the heath-stepper, wearied by hounds,
the strong-antlered hart, seeks the wood,
put to flight from afar, he [would] sooner give up his life,
his life on the water's edge, before he would [go] in there
to hide his head; that is not a pleasant place.
From there the tossing waves, dark,
rise up to the clouds, where the wind stirs up
harmful weather, until they choke the air,
the heavens weep.] (*Beo* 1357b–76a)

Here, the mere forms part of a *dygel lond*, 'hidden land' (1357b), a secrecy which extends to the body of water itself, of which the poet states, *No þæs frod leofað gumena bearna, / þæt þone grund wite*, 'There is no-one so wise amongst the sons of men who knows the bottom [of it]' (1366b–7).[26] Not only is the place steeped in mystery, but it is also laden with danger: Grendel and his mother traverse *frecne fengelad*, 'dangerous fen-paths' (1359a), and so too must anyone wishing to approach the mere.[27] The enigmatic and dangerous attributes of the mere are emphasised to Beowulf when, having finished giving his account of the mere, Hrothgar cautions him, *Eard git ne const, / frecne stowe*, 'You do not yet know that region, that dangerous place' (1377b–8a).[28] Equally important are the mere's accompanying landscape features and harsh forms of weather, which accentuate this hostile environment: *wulfhleoþu*,

[26] See, however, Michelet, *Creation, Migration, and Conquest*, p. 80, who notes the apparent contradiction between Hrothgar's claim that the mere is both a *dygel lond*, 'secret land' (1357b), and his vivid, detailed description of the place immediately after that.
[27] On the element *gelad*, see Gelling, pp. 10–11.
[28] Whether this is strictly true, given Beowulf's earlier visit to the mere in lines 837–924, is perhaps not important (on the question of consistency, see comments above).

windige næssas, 'wolf-slopes, windy headlands' (1358), *hrinde bearwas*, 'frost-covered groves' (1363b), and the uncanny *niðwundor… fyr on flode*, 'evil wonder… fire on (or 'in') the water' (1366a).[29] There is also the above-mentioned *fyrgenstream*, 'mountain-stream' (1359b), the downward motion of which is conveyed in lines 1360–1a: *under næssa genipu niþer gewiteð, / flod under foldan*, '[it] plunges down into the headlands' mists, water under the earth'. The water of the mere itself is disturbed and restless, as emphasised in the passage's climax by the fact that *yðgeblond up astigeð / won to wolcnum*, 'tossing waves, dark, rise up to the clouds' (1373–4b), mixing with the *lað gewidru*, 'harmful weather' (1375a), of the skies; so terrible is this place, in fact, that even the heavens themselves weep (*roderas reotað*, 1376a). Like various examples encountered in earlier chapters, here unpleasant weather reflects the emotional aspect of the scene: the tumultuous weather anticipates the coming conflict between Beowulf and Grendel's mother. Additionally, the 'inexpressibility topos' of the stag which dare not even hide in the mere from pursuing hounds conveys the terror that the place evokes more effectively still, though whether Beowulf himself fears the place is not clear.[30] The description of the stag as *heorot hornum trum*, 'the strong-antlered hart' (1369a), 'cannot', in Orchard's words, 'help but conjure images of the imperilled Danish hall, Heorot, with its wide gables', discussed in Chapter 1.[31] The result of this relentless enumeration of the mere's features is that nowhere else in *Beowulf* 'is setting laden with such a charge of dread and foreboding as it is here'.[32] Since the mere exudes such a strong sense of dread, it should be seen not simply as

[29] Chris Abram, 'New Light on the Illumination of Grendel's Mere', *JEGP*, 109 (2010), 198–216, understands the *fyr on flode* as light reflected off the gold hoard of Grendel and his mother's *niðsele*.
[30] The term, 'Unsagbarkeitstopos', is that of Curtius in his *European Literature*, pp. 159–60; it is discussed with relation to *The Phoenix* in Steen, pp. 43–5, at 43. For discussion of the *topos* in the context of Blickling Homily XVI, see Wright, *The Irish Tradition*, esp. pp. 136–45, at 145; in reference to the horrors of Hell in Vercelli Homily IX, see *The Vercelli Homilies*, ed. by Scragg p. 170; and for discussion of the *topos* in homiletic literature more generally, see Bolintineanu, 'Marvelous Spaces', pp. 70–84. For a reading of the reluctant hart as an antithetical *topos* to the 'hero on the beach', see Sarah L. Higley, '*Aldor on Ofre*, or the Reluctant Hart: A Study of Liminality in *Beowulf*', *NM*, 87 (1986), 342–53; and Dora Faraci, 'La caccia al cervo nel *Beowulf*', *Romanobarbarica*, 14 (1996–97 [1998]), 375–420. For a discussion of an early twelfth-century analogue for the motif of the reluctant hart, see A.G. Rigg, '*Beowulf* 1368–72: An Analogue', *NQ*, 29, 2 (1982), 101–2.
[31] Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 156.
[32] Hugh Magennis, *Images of Community*, p. 133; cf. Brodeur, *The Art of Beowulf*, pp. 88–106, esp. 95–9.

'setting', which implies that it is only a part of the background, but as an example of one of the most clearly defined places in all of Old English literature: it is very much in the foreground in this part of the poem.

The mere, and the importance attached to it, is emphasised further by the various subverbal techniques employed by the *Beowulf*-poet in this passage. Writing of these lines, Eric Stanley famously remarked, 'Nowhere else are the standard [Old English] poetic phrases combined to such effect', producing 'a gallimauphry of devices, each of which is horrific in its associations'.[33] Although the concatenation of harsh landscape features and harmful forms of weather is in itself an effective literary technique, the poetics of lines 1357b–76a repays close analysis because of the way in which the 'gallimauphry of devices' draws the reader's, and especially the listener's, attention to the passage. In this way, not only is the passage highlighted clearly as an important moment in the narrative, but the mere itself is marked out as a significant place in the poem—in some ways more significant even than Heorot. That the mere was meant to stick in the memory of the poem's audience is made all the clearer by the similarly impressive array of poetic devices employed in the shorter description of the place in lines 1408–17a. These passages exploit a range of techniques already encountered in depictions of other places in the poetic corpus, including the use of envelope patterns, paronomasia and assonance, and extensive double and interlinear alliteration throughout.

Double-alliteration, Orchard notes, is a 'relatively common' phenomenon in the 'set-pieces' of *Beowulf*, 'where sound-play is often used to highlight particular portions of the narrative'.[34] Across twenty lines of poetry there are twelve instances of double alliteration, which fall on *f* four times (1359, 1361, 1366, 1370), on *w* three times (1358, 1364, 1374), on the nasal consonants *n* and *m* twice (1360, 1362), and on *h* once (1369), with single alliteration

[33] Stanley, 'Old English Poetic', p. 441. Stanley rightly seemed unconcerned that '[f]actually the scenery could hardly exist'.
[34] Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 47; see also pp. 61–9.

on *h* and *n* occurring twice and once further respectively (1363, 1368, and 1365).[35] These lines also bear witness to the sheer extent of interlinear alliteration throughout the passage.[36] Moreover, paronomasia is found throughout: *fyr-*/*fyr* (1359b, 1366a), *niþ-*/*nið* (1370b, 1375b), *flod… fold-*/*flode*/*fly-* (1361a, 1366a, 1370a), *-mear-*/*mer-* (1372), *heor-*/*hor-*/*heor-* (1369a, 1372b), *feor-*/*feor-* (1370), with additional assonance on *-eor-*/*-or-* occurring five times over only four lines in these last examples, coinciding with the inexpressibility *topos* of the pursued hart (1369–72b), which is further marked out by the interlinear alliteration on *h* in three of the five lines. Moreover, the wordplay in line 1372 (*-mear-*/*mer-*) echoes the elements *mær-*/*mear-*/*mor-*/*mer-* associated with Grendel and his mother and the spaces that they rule. The highly ornate use of such extensive double and interlinear alliteration and striking wordplay in these lines emphasise the way in which the audience is to understand the mere: as a simultaneously awe-inspiring and awful place, with the images of the harsh wind, crashing waves, and fleeing hart elevated by the overwhelming aurality of the passage. Finally, the wind and moving water are used to demarcate this passage in a clear example of an envelope pattern: the description of windy headlands and the downward flow of water in lines 1357b–61a mark out this hostile landscape, whilst the rising, tossing waves and the inimical windy weather of lines 1373–6a close off the passage.[37] Not only is the mere neatly defined by its distinctive topography and climate, but it is also marked out within the text by the use of these poetic devices.

Such poetic techniques and similar landscape features also occur in the further short description of the mere, provided by the poem’s narrator when Hrothgar, Beowulf and their companions set off in search of Grendel’s mother:

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[35] If one accepts the insertion of *hydan* instead of *beorgan* in line 1372a, this alliteration occurs twice and there are then thirteen lines containing double alliteration in the passage.

[36] Additionally, the repetition of *st-*, *s-*, and *sw-* in the fourth lift of nine lines hardly seems coincidental, as noted by Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 48, n. 156.

[37] On the use of repetition and the envelope pattern in *Beowulf*, see Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 78–85.

Ofereode þa æþelinga bearn
steap stanhliðo, stige nearwe,
enge anpaðas, uncuð gelad,
neowle næssas, nicorhusa fela;
he feara sum beforan gengde
wisra monna wong sceawian,
oþ þæt he færinga fyrgenbeamas
ofer harne stan hleonian funde,
wynleasne wudu; wæter under stod
dreorig ond gedrefed.

[Then the son of noblemen[38] passed over
steep stone-slopes, confined paths,
narrow passes, unknown ways,
low-lying headlands, many dwellings of water-monsters;
he, one amongst a few wise men,
went ahead to look at the place,
until he suddenly found mountain-trees
hanging over a grey stone,
joyless woods; water stood beneath
bloody and disturbed.] (1408–17a)

Here, the pathways are not *frecne fengelad*, ‘dangerous fen-paths’ (1359a), but ‘confined’, ‘narrow’ and ‘unknown’—*stige nearwe, / enge anpaðas, uncuð gelad* (1409b–10)—reiterating the atmosphere of foreboding and the unknown that pervades the earlier longer passage, and exaggerating the sense of claustrophobia experienced on the approach to the mere.[39] In this description, there are *steap stanhliðo*, ‘steep stone-slopes’ (1409a), instead of *wulfhleoþu*, ‘wolf-slopes’ (1358a),[40] *fyrgenbeamas*, ‘mountain-trees’ (1414b), instead of the rhyming *fyrgenstream* (1359b) of Hrothgar’s speech. These mountain-trees are also described as *wynleasne wudu*, ‘joyless woods’ (1416a), which hang *ofer harne stan*, ‘over a grey stone’

[38] Note that, as Brodeur, *The Art of Beowulf*, p. 164, discusses, *æþelinga bearn* (1408b) has sometimes been understood as designating a plural here. The referent of *he* (1412a), however, is ambiguous, though the last male named is Hrothgar. Fulk, Bjork and Niles note that it ‘would be even more puzzling if Beowulf is intended’ (see *Klaeber’s Beowulf*, p. 203); indeed, Beowulf is not named again until line 1441b.
[39] This is not conveyed, however, when the poet describes Beowulf’s first foray to, and return from, the mere in lines 837–924. See Bolintineanu, ‘Marvelous Spaces’, pp. 125–6. Note as well the *verbatim* parallel of *enge anpaðas, uncuð gelad* in *Exodus* 58, and the parallel with *Aeneid* XI:524 ff.; on these parallels, see *Exodus*, ed. by Peter J. Lucas, 3rd edn (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2020), pp. 69–71; and *Klaeber’s Beowulf*, p. 203. On the parallels with classical literature in these passages, see below.
[40] On the element *hleoþ*/*hlið* in this compound, see Gelling, pp. 8–9.

(1415a), much as the *hrinde bearwas*, 'frost-covered groves' (1363b), in the earlier passage hang over Hrothgar's mere.[41] The many verbal parallels clearly show that the two passages ought to be considered together, and they reinforce that which Hrothgar has already stated 'with typically Beowulfian understatement': *nis þæt heoru stow*, 'that is not a pleasant place'.[42] In addition to these verbal parallels there are the several subverbal parallels in the repeated interlinear alliterations on *f* (1412, 1414) and *w* (1413, 1416), and additionally on *h* (1415) and *n* (1411), such that six of the ten lines in this passage share alliterating sounds with the first description of the mere.[43] Similarly, there is paronomasia in the syllables *en-/an-/un-* (1410), *fear-/for-/fær-/fyr-* (1412, 1414; cf. *fyr-* and *feor-* in Hrothgar's description), as well as in *nearwe/neowle* (1409b, 1411a), *won-/wyn-* (1413b, 1416a), and *dreo-/dre-* (1417a), further underscoring the aural connections between the two passages.

Another significant feature of this second passage, not present in the first, is the *harne stan*, 'grey stone' (1415a), over which the trees of the mere hang. This collocation occurs earlier in *Beowulf* at line 887b, when Sigemund undertakes to kill the dragon *under harne stan*, a foreshadowing of Beowulf's own entrance into the dragon's lair later in the poem, when his voice reverberates *under harne stan* (2553b); and again, as Beowulf lies dying, he instructs Wiglaf to examine the dragon's hoard *under harne stan* (2744b).[44] These references to *har stan* delineate Beowulf's fight with the dragon, signalling the beginning and the end of this encounter. As was discussed in the previous chapter, the city of Mermedonia is likewise

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[41] Michael D.J. Bintley, '*Hrinde Bearwas*: The Trees at the Mere and the Root of All Evil in *Beowulf*', *JEGP*, 119 (2020), 309–26, argues that the *hrinde bearwas* may have been interpreted by the poem's audience (if not the Danes or the Geats themselves) in terms of the biblical tradition of the Tree of Knowledge, the subsequent Fall and, ultimately, the exile of Cain.

[42] Niles, '*Beowulf* and Lejre', p. 218. Note the other verbal parallels which reinforce how these two passages are woven together: *æþelinga bearn*, 'sons of noblemen' (1408b), echoing *gumena bearna*, 'sons of men' (1367a), and *wisra monna*, 'wise men' (1413a), recalling *frod*, 'wise [man]', '[man] advanced in years' (1366b).

[43] These shared alliterating sounds are not surprising, however, given the repetition of certain lexemes, viz. *næssas*, *fyrgen-*, and *wudu*.

[44] On the Sigemund digression and its parallels with Beowulf's own fights with monsters, see *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. xlvi; and Fox, pp. 123–34. For a problematisation of the parallels between these episodes, see Mark S. Griffith, 'Some Difficulties in *Beowulf*, Lines 874–902: Sigemund Reconsidered', *ASE*, 24 (1995), 11–41 (esp. pp. 32–4); however, Griffith omits the parallel of *harne stan* from his discussion.

marked out both as a physical location and as a site of narrative significance in *Andreas* by the half-line *ymbe harne stan*, 'around the grey stone' (*And* 841b), just one of a number of apparent borrowings from *Beowulf* at this point in the poem.[45] Indeed, a number of critics have rightly identified each instance of *harne stan* in *Beowulf* as a 'boundary marker': for William Cooke it is 'a monumental standing stone' at the entrances of both the mere and the dragon's lair, whilst for Michael Swisher it 'indicates the boundary between the known, familiar world of human activity and the frightening realm of monsters, the supernatural and unusual adventure', though one might object that by the time of his fight with the dragon, such adventures have in fact become rather routine for Beowulf.[46] As Fox has shown, moreover, references to *har stan* occur in the bounds sections of some nineteen Anglo-Saxon charters, most of which appear to date from the tenth century, indicating that *har stan* was a reasonably common boundary marker in the English landscape at this time.[47] Arguably the most significant other occurrence of this collocation in the Old English corpus is found in Blickling Homily XVI, with which the first description of the mere in particular has a number of parallels, discussed below. What seems clear in this text, though, is that, once again, the *sumne harne stan*, 'certain grey stone', which St Michael sees is a boundary marker, to the north of which (*norð of ðæm stane*) extends a hellish landscape resembling the mere of *Beowulf*.[48] In the case of the second description of the mere, the *harne stan* marks the transition in the landscape from the *fyrgenbeamas*, 'mountain-trees' (1414b), which hang over it, to the waters below (*wæter under stod*, 1416a).

The 'certain grey stone' of Blickling Homily XVI also signposts another feature of this hellish landscape in common with the mere of *Beowulf*: *under þæm stane wæs niccra eardung*

[45] In the poetic corpus, the collocation also occurs in *The Ruin* 43a (*ofer harne stan*) and in *Riddle* 40:74b (*se hara stan*). See Fox, *Following the Formula*, pp. 127–9.
[46] William Cooke, 'Two Notes on *Beowulf* (with Glances at *Vafþrúðnismál*, Blickling Homily 16, and *Andreas*, lines 839–846)', *Medium Ævum*, 72 (2003), 297–301 (p. 298); Michael Swisher, 'Beyond the Hoar Stone', *Neophilologus*, 86 (2002), 133–136 (p. 133).
[47] Fox, pp. 134–9; for a list of the charters themselves, of which some three or four are of dubious provenance, see pp. 135–6.
[48] *The Blickling Homilies*, ed. and trans. by Morris, p. 209. Note that in Morris's numeration, the homily is Blickling Homily XVII.

ond wearga, 'under that stone there was the dwelling of water-monsters and evil beings'.[49] Although the shorter description of the mere in *Beowulf* 1408–17a is essentially a paraphrase of Hrothgar's considerably more embellished account of the mere, it contains a noteworthy feature not found in the longer passage: *nicorhusa fela*, 'many dwellings of water-monsters' (1411b), which picks up on an earlier description of the mere as *nicera mere*, 'the water-monsters' mere' (845b), and which is alluded to again in line 1427b, which describes *on næshleoðum nicras licgean*, 'water-monsters lying on headland-slopes'. Additionally, *nicor* occurs on two earlier occasions in *Beowulf* (422a and 575a), when Beowulf twice describes how he was assailed by *niceras* during his perilous swimming contest with Breca, a maritime encounter which foreshadows Beowulf's foray into waters of the mere.[50] The presence, in the mere, of *nicoras*, which the audience of the poem already knows to be dangerous, only serves to heighten the sense of peril attached to the place: not only will Beowulf have to contend with the ire of a grieving mother, but first he must risk the *nicor*-infested waters. Although the form of these creatures is—like that of Grendel and his mother—ambiguous, perhaps deliberately so, the monstrosity of the *nicoras* is confirmed by their being likened to, or included among, the *wyrmcynnes fela, sellice sædracan* […], *wyrmas ond wildeor*, 'many kinds of serpents, strange sea-dragons […], serpents and wild-beasts' (1425b–30a), which populate the mere. Similarly, when he descends into the mere itself, Beowulf is attacked by *wundra fela*, 'many wonders' (1509b), and *sædeor monig*, 'many sea-beasts' (1510b), which presumably include those *nicoras* already mentioned.[51] As residents of the waters of the mere, these monstrous beings are not only localised in place, but they are also constitutive of that place. And although they may be wondrous, the *nicoras* are nonetheless understood as belonging to the rest of the

[49] *The Blickling Homilies*, ed. by Morris, p. 209.
[50] That Beowulf's accounts here refer to the same exploit is probable, though it is possible that he has two separate occasions in mind. See *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 141.
[51] Indeed, in line 1440a, the *nicor* which is killed is referred to as a ***wundor**lic wægbora*, 'wondrous wave-bearer'.

flora and fauna of the mere, confirming Neville's assertion, cited above, that 'the "monstrous" is not opposed to the "natural"'. Such an understanding of these creatures is corroborated by the appearance of *nicoras* in similar contexts in the only two other texts in which they occur, namely, *The Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*, also found in British Library, London, MS Cotton Vitellius A.xv, and, as has already been mentioned, Blickling Homily XVI.[52]

In addition to parallels with texts such as *Andreas*, *The Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*, and Blickling Homily XVI, the set-piece of Hrothgar's description of the mere (1357b–76b), like the later shorter description of it (1408–17a), also contains analogues with classical literature, notably with the *Aeneid*.[53] More recently, Anlezark has identified the mere of *Beowulf*, like the dragon-infested *mercstede*, 'border-place', in *Solomon and Saturn II* 218a, as a reflex more specifically of the classical 'poisoned place', as exemplified by Avernus, the entrance to the underworld in the *Aeneid*.[54] However, nowhere are such parallels with the mere of *Beowulf* more conspicuous than at the end of Blickling Homily XVI. The relevant part of the homily, like, perhaps, the parallels in *Beowulf*, derive from one of the Latin redactions of the *Visio sancti Pauli*, which was also translated into Old English.[55] Richard Morris first drew

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[52] Of the other five occurrences of *nicor* in the Old English corpus, two are found in *The Letter of Alexander to Aristotle* (in which the word refers to hippopotami), and three in Blickling Homily XVI; the word is found, then, only in these three possibly related texts. On the various parallels between the description of the mere and passages in the prose *The Letter of Aristotle to Alexander*, see Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 28–36, and *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 45–7.

[53] Both Rigg, '*Beowulf* 1368–72: An Analogue', and Klaeber, '*Aeneis* und *Beowulf*', *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 126 (1911), 40–8, 339–59, identify *Aeneid*, VI:236–42 and XI:522–9 as a possible classical analogue. See especially Theodore M. Andersson, 'The Virgilian Heritage in *Beowulf*', in his *Early Epic Scenery: Homer, Virgil, and the Medieval Legacy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976), pp. 145–59; Tom Burns Haber, *A Comparative Study of the Beowulf and the Aeneid* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1931); Magennis, *Images of Community*, pp. 135–8; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 132–7, and *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 44–5; Alan Renoir, 'The Terror of the Dark Waters: A Note on Virgilian and Beowulfian Techniques', in *The Learned and the Lewed: Studies in Chaucer and Medieval Literature*, ed. by Larry D. Benson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp. 147–60; and Schrader, pp. 76–84. On the widespread knowledge of the *Aeneid* in Anglo-Saxon England more generally, see Andy Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, CSASE, 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 130–5. For an account of the possible Irish influence in this passage, see Martin Puhvel, '*Beowulf* and Irish Underwater Adventure', in his *Beowulf and Celtic Tradition* (Warterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1979), pp. 73–81.

[54] Daniel Anlezark, 'Poisoned Places: The Avernian Tradition in Old English Poetry', *ASE*, 36 (2007), 103–26. See also Rigg, p. 102.

[55] For texts and discussion, see *Visio Sancti Pauli: The History of the Apocalypse in Latin together with Nine Texts*, ed. by Theodore Silverstein, Studies and Documents, 4 (London: Christophers, 1935); *The Old English Vision of St. Paul*, ed. by Antonette diPaolo Healey, Speculum Anniversary Monographs, 2 (Cambridge, MA:

attention to the linguistic similarities between Blickling Homily XVI and the first mere passage in *Beowulf* 1357b–76a, which are concerned primarily with the physical features of the hellish landscape depicted.[56] In addition to the *harne stan* and *niccra eardung* mentioned above, the homily describes a place *þær ealle wætero niðer gewitað*, 'where all waters plunge down', surrounded by *swiðe hrimige bearwas*, 'very frosty trees', and shrouded in *þystrogenipu*, 'dark mists'.[57] The precise nature of the relationship between the homily, *Beowulf*, and *Visio sancti Pauli* is complex to say the least: while the homilist responsible for Blickling Homily XVI clearly drew on the *Visio*, evidence of the same in the case of *Beowulf* is possible but 'much less compelling', according to Charles Wright, since the poem may well have been one of the sources for the homily.[58] Whatever the nature of the relationship between these three texts, though, more crucial, as Wright observes, is that where one might well expect similarities between Blickling Homily XVI and the *Visio*—after all, they 'describ[e] the same thing – hell'—one cannot expect the same in *Beowulf*, for it 'is describing something different, however much it may owe to the same tradition'.[59] Though some scholars have nonetheless viewed the mere as a hell on earth, a gateway to hell, or as symbolising hell itself, others have tended to see it only as hell*ish*, that is, as connoting rather than denoting hell.[60] Following

Mediaeval Academy of America, 1978), pp. 19–30, 62–73; and *The Blickling Homilies*, ed. by Morris, pp. 208–11. For a comprehensive study of the relationship between the three texts, see esp. Wright, *The Irish Tradition*, pp. 106–36.

[56] *The Blickling Homilies*, ed. by Morris, pp. vi–vii. These similarities are summarised in Carleton Brown, '*Beowulf* and the *Blickling Homilies* and Some Textual Notes', *PMLA*, 53 (1938), 905–16 (p. 908); and Wright, *The Irish Tradition*, p. 119, who also summarises the opposing views found in the scholarship. See also Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 157–8, and *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 39–42.

[57] *The Blickling Homilies*, ed. by Morris, p. 209. For all of the parallels, see Wright, *The Irish Tradition*, pp. 129–30.

[58] Wright, *The Irish Tradition*, p. 121; cf. Brown, pp. 905–9; and *The Old English Vision of St. Paul*, ed. by diPaolo Healey, p. 52. Rowland L. Collins, 'Blickling Homily XVI and the Dating of *Beowulf*', in *Medieval Studies Conference, Aachen, 1983: Language and Literature*, ed. by Wolf-Dietrich Bald and Horst Weinstock, Bamberger Beiträge zur englischen Sprachwissenschaft, 15 (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1984), pp. 61–9, however, argues for the opposite direction of influence.

[59] Wright, *The Irish Tradition*, p. 133; for a fuller discussion of what *Beowulf* might owe to the *Visio*, see pp. 132–6.

[60] Scholars who view it as one of the former options include Anlezark, *Water and Fire*, pp. 322–3; p. 306; M. McNamee, '*Beowulf* – An Allegory of Salvation?', *JEGP*, 59 (1960), 190–207 (pp. 199–200); Marijane Osborn, 'Manipulating Waterfalls: Mythic Places in *Beowulf* and *Grettissaga*, Lawrence and Purnell', in *Myth in Early Northwest Europe*, ed. by Stephen O. Glosecki, Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, 21 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), p. 127; Maria Elena Ruggerini, 'L'eroe germanico contro avversari mostruosi: tra

Wright, Orchard observes that 'in introducing motifs of a description of hell [...], the *Beowulf*-poet has naturalised them in their new setting'.[61] Although scholars have been quick to point out the apparent impossibility of the landscape described, that the *Beowulf*-poet sought to naturalise hellish topographical traits in the context of the mere seems clear. If, then, the mere is not hell itself, but only *like* hell, what is it? As the following section demonstrates, the way in which the concatenation of hostile elements used to describe the mere exploits and inverts the classical trope of the *locus amoenus* (discussed in the last chapter) strongly suggests that the mere was to be understood, rather, as a *locus terribilis*.

The mere as a locus terribilis

As was discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, reflexes of the classical trope of the *locus amoenus*, 'pleasant place', are found throughout the Old English corpus in poems such as *Judgement Day II*, *Andreas*, *Guthlac A*, and *The Phoenix*. The mere of *Beowulf*, however, might be understood, as Magennis suggests, as an 'inverted *locus amoenus*'.[62] Indeed, that this place is emphatically not a *locus amoenus* is made explicit by Hrothgar in his litotic exclamation *nis þæt heoru stow*, 'that is not a pleasant place' (1372b).[63] As was noted in the last chapter, Curtius first defined the *locus amoenus* as a place which comprises 'a beautiful, shaded natural site', 'a tree (or

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testo e iconografia', in *La Funzione dell'eroe germanico: Storicità, metafora, paradigma, atti del convegno internazionale di studio Roma, 6–8 maggio 1993*, ed. by Teresa Pároli (Rome: Il Calamo, 1995), pp. 202–3; and Geoffrey Russom, 'At the Center of *Beowulf*', in *Myth in Early Northwest Europe*, ed. by Glosecki, p. 231. Critics who view it as an instance of the latter include the editors of *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. ci, clxxviii; Margaret E. Goldsmith, *The Mode and Meaning of Beowulf* (London: Athlone, 1970), p. 116; Magennis, p. 134; and Neville, p. 75, 59–60, n. 27. On the association between fens and hell in the medieval period more generally, see R.D. Cornelius, 'Palus inamabilis', *Speculum*, 2 (1927), 321–5.

[61] Wright, *The Irish Tradition*, p. 135; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 158. These stances might be summed up by the comments in *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. lxxvii, clxxviii, that the mere 'calls up visions of hell' and 'is a nightmarish landscape, reminiscent of hell', whereas Blickling Homily XVI describes 'the literal entrance to hell'.

[62] Magennis, *Images of Community*, pp. 138–43, at 140; cf. Osborn, 'Manipulating Waterfalls', p. 217.

[63] This is not to suggest, of course, that the *Beowulf*-poet was putting classical rhetoric into the mouth of Hrothgar here.

several trees), a meadow, and a spring or brook', occasionally '[b]irdsong and flowers', and, more rarely still, 'a breeze'.[64] As an inversion of the *locus amoenus*, the mere is neither beautiful nor shaded but dangerous and exposed to the elements, and instead of idyllic trees, a brook, or a breeze, it is characterised by frost-covered groves, tumultuous waters, and windy headlands; and for birdsong it at least suggests the noise of howling wolves and a terrified stag hunted by hounds. In her discussion of *The Phoenix*, Janie Steen has noted that the inexpressibility *topos*, discussed above, 'has long been the conventional portrayal of places of perfection… [and] is typically tied to the *locus amoenus*'.[65] In his identification of a late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century analogue for the inexpressibility *topos*, Alexander Neckham's *De laudibus divinae sapientiae* 5:773–6, A.G. Rigg was the first to call the mere a *locus terriblis*, 'terrible place', the term used in this discussion.[66] John Howe has also since described the place as a *locus horribilis*, 'horrible place', defining this as 'the opposite of Paradise, a blighted landscape, a place of horror, vast solitude, and impassability, abounding in savage beasts and demons'.[67] The mere is terrible because of its ominous topographical and meteorological attributes and its hostile inhabitants, all of which are constitutive of its significance as a place in the poem.

The basic definition of the *locus terribilis*, advanced by Ermanno Malaspina, is purely contrastive with that of the *locus amoenus*, referring to types of landscape 'neither loved nor desired, described in opposition to or as a negation of the *locus amoenus*'—in other words, a *locus inamoenus*.[68] In his detailed study of these *topoi*, Klaus Garber identifies the 'seclusion

[64] Curtius, *European Literature*, pp. 192–200, at 195.
[65] Steen, p. 43.
[66] Rigg, p. 102.
[67] John Howe, 'Creating Symbolic Landscapes: Medieval Development of Sacred Space', in *Inventing Medieval Landscapes*, ed. by Howe and Wolfe, pp. 210–12, at 212. Howe also notes that the lack of discussion of the *locus horribilis* in Curtius's treatment of the *locus amoenus* was probably because there was no *formal* classical precedent for the *topos*.
[68] Ermanno Malaspina, 'Tipologie dell'inameno nella letteratura latina – *Locus Horridus*, paesaggio eroico, paesaggio dionisiaco: una proposta di risistemazione', *Aufidus*, 23 (1994), 7–22 (p. 9): 'non amati e non desiderati, descritti in opposizione o come negazione del *locus amœnus*'. For a more critical view of the *locus terribilis*, see Jean Trinquier, 'Le Motif du repaire des brigands et le *topos* du *locus horridus*: Apulée,

of the place', its 'lack of cultivation', 'silence', 'danger and dread', and 'darkness and uncanniness' as the principal traits of the *locus terribilis*, characteristics also identified in Julián Muela Ezuerra's analysis, where he also describes *loci terribiles* as 'punitive or hostile places', descriptions befitting the mere of *Beowulf*.[69]. Both Garber and Muela Ezuerra stress, moreover, the hostility and inhospitability of the *locus terribilis*, and they recognise dread as the main emotional response to it. Debbie Felton and Kate Gilhuly likewise specify dread as the primary negative emotion encountered in this kind of place: '[T]he projection of dread onto the external environment roots the instability of feeling in the natural world, making the inevitability of the dreaded outcome more pervasive and more real'.[70] Dread is, of course, all too familiar an emotion to the audience of *Beowulf*, for the poem, in Lapidge's phrasing, is 'permeated' with it.[71] Indeed, the 'projection of dread' onto the natural world is visible throughout Hrothgar's description of the mere to Beowulf. That Beowulf, in lines 1383–96, appears to remain unperturbed by Hrothgar's words perhaps prompts the narrator's second, abridged, description of the place, reinforcing to the audience, if not to Beowulf himself, that this is truly a place to be feared, anticipating the danger that Beowulf will face on his descent into the mere and upon his arrival in Grendel's mother's abode. Just as significant as the sense of dread attributed to the mere is the fact that it is an inverted place—an anti-place—antithetical to the human social space of Heorot, which it defines by virtue of its opposition to it.

Métamorphoses, IV, 6', *Revue de la Philologie de Littérature et d'Histoire Anciennes*, 73 (1999), 257–77. Note that in studies of classical literature, the preferred designation of the *locus terribilis* is often either *horridus* or *horribilis*; for the sake of consistency, I use *terribilis* throughout this discussion.

[69] Klaus Garber, *Der locus amoenus und der locus terribilis: Bild und Funktion der Natur in der deutschen Schäfer- und Landlebendichtung des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Köln: Böhlau, 1974), pp. 240–64 ('Abgelegenheit des Ortes', 'Unfruchtbarkeit und Unkultiviertheit', 'Stille', 'Gefährlichkeit und Ekelhaftigkeit', and 'Dunkelheit und Unheimlichkeit'); and Julián Muela Ezquerra, 'Préface', in *Le Locus terribilis: topique et experience de l'horrible*, ed. by Julián Muela Ezquerra (Bern: Lang, 2013), p. 10 ('lieux punitifs ou agressifs').

[70] Debbie Felton and Kate Gilhuly, 'Introduction: Dread and the Landscape', in *Landscapes of Dread in Classical Antiquity: Negative Emotion in Natural and Constructed Spaces*, ed. by Debbie Felton (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), pp. 2–3.

[71] Lapidge, 'Psychology of Terror', p. 386.

By framing the mere as a *locus terribilis*, the *Beowulf*-poet reconfigures the notion of the central place in this part of the poem. As discussed in Chapter 1, Heorot is the centre of human social space in *Beowulf*; however, in the descriptions of the mere, the centre is realigned with the space of the *moras…, fen on fæsten* beyond Heorot by describing Grendel's mother's dwelling in terms resembling the hall. Although Grendel may be dead by the time that Beowulf and his companions are confronted with the horror of the mere, the social unit which earlier in the poem constituted Grendel—himself an 'anti-thegn' (*healðegnes*, 142a)[72]—his mother, and, ostensibly, the *nicoras* and other beasts that surrounded them represents another inversion, a kind of 'anti-society'. And with the inversion of human social space, it follows, then, that there should be an inverted dwelling place for it, an 'ironic counterpart' to Heorot, 'an anti-hall'.[73] Indeed, in line 1513 Beowulf observes that *he* [*in*] *niðsele nathwylcum wæs*, 'he was in some sort of hostile hall', which is described as a place

> þær him nænig wæter   wihte ne sceþede,
> ne him for hrofsele   hrinan ne mehte
> færgripe flodes;   fyrleoht geseah,
> blacne leoman   beorhte scinan.
>
> [where no water could harm him at all,
> nor could the sudden grasp of the water touch him
> because of the roofed hall; he saw fire-light,
> splendid radiance shining brightly.] (1514–17)

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[72] *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. xliv.

[73] Magennis, *Images of Community*, pp. 61–2; Hume, 'The Concept of the Hall', p. 68; and similarly, Bolintineanu, 'Marvelous Spaces', pp. 198–9, n. 406; Mackie, p. 461; Neville, p. 76; and Donoghue, p. 39. Cf., however, Heide Estes, '*Beowulf* and the Sea: An Ecofeminist Reading', in *The Maritime World of the Anglo-Saxons*, ed. by Stacy S. Klein and others (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2014), p. 225, who mistakenly views the place as merely 'a *naturally* occurring cave, in opposition to *the built environment* of Heorot' (emphasis added); and Bennett, 'The Postmodern Hall in *Beowulf*', para. 13 (emphasis added) [accessed 12 November 2018], for whom the *niðsele* 'is all the things that Heorot is not: dark, watery, below ground, surrounded by monsters, and *not "constructed"*'.

Here, the place is referred to as *hrofsele*, 'a roofed hall' (1515a), and later simply as *reced*, 'hall' (1572b), and, by emendation, *guðsele*, 'battle-hall' (2139a).[74] Similarly, of course, Heorot itself is described variously as *heal*(*l*), *sele* and *reced*, both as simplexes and in compounds, and its roof is one of its most striking external features. Though the inimical place in which Beowulf finds himself is first described rather ambiguously as a *niðsele*, 'hostile hall',[75] it is, like Heorot, a roofed dwelling of some kind, sheltered from the water of the mere outside, and it seems to have a fire burning brightly inside, such that, according to Orchard, the 'dwelling is described in human, almost homely terms'.[76] Several critics have cast doubt, however, on just how homely this fire is, pointing out that *fyrleoht* (a *hapax legomenon*) need not denote the same thing as Present Day English 'firelight'.[77] Nonetheless, Discenza also argues for the domesticity of the place by suggesting that the *wealle*, 'walls' (1573a), are indicative of a domestic setting,[78] and, more persuasively, that Grendel's recumbent corpse *on ræste*, 'on a bed/couch' (1585b), implies more human-like living quarters than one might otherwise expect to find in Grendel and his mother's dwelling.[79] This would appear, then, to be a lived-in place or, simply put, a home.

However the ambiguous *fyrleoht* is to be interpreted, the *niðsele* is doubtless to be taken as an inversion of Heorot. By descending into the mere to take revenge for Æschere's murder,

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[74] Although Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 89, accepts the restoration of *guðsele* on the basis of *Beo* 443a, he prefers *grundsele*, which could have been omitted due to eyeskip caused by confusion with the immediately following *Grendles*.
[75] On the meaning of *nið* in *Beowulf*, see Louise Corso, 'Some Considerations of the Concept *nið* in *Beowulf*', *Neophilologus*, 64 (1980), 121–6.
[76] Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, p. 30. Cf. *Lixte se leoma, leoht inne stod*, 'The radiance shone, there was light within' (1570). Note the earlier occurrence of *lixte se leoma* in line 311a where it refers to the light of Heorot, quite literally highlighting the parallels between the two 'halls'.
[77] See Abram, 'New Light', p. 209, who argues that 'There is no reason to doubt that this radiance, the *fyrleoht* in line 1516b and the *fyr on flode* that Hrothgar sees from the mere's shores are one and the same, and arise from the same source' (i.e. gold, not fire); Mackie, p. 461, who suggests that *fyrleoht* does not mean 'fire-light' but 'fiery light', 'which is quite a different thing'; and Russom, p. 234, who points out that *fyrleoht* 'probably had no domestic connotations, unlike modern English firelight'. It should also be noted that the internal hostility of the *niðsele* is reflected in its exterior environment, in which a *niðwundor*, 'evil wonder' (1365b), can be seen in or on the waters of the mere.
[78] See the discussion in Chapters 2 and 3 of (usually windswept) exterior walls.
[79] Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, pp. 148–9.

Beowulf's actions mirror those of Grendel's mother when she earlier invaded the safe confines of Heorot to avenge her son's death. And just as Grendel's mother decapitates Æschere whilst he lies sleeping on one of Heorot's benches, so too does Beowulf behead Grendel's corpse, which he finds recumbent *on ræste*, 'on a bed'. The place which Beowulf enters as a *gist*, 'guest, visitor' (1522b) and *selegyst*, 'hall-guest' (1545a), with its roofed structure, illumination, and other 'homely' features, mirrors the hall into which Grendel's mother, and Grendel before her, had previously intruded. Although there is no ambiguity in these references to Beowulf, J.R.R. Tolkien noted that similar references to Grendel as a *gæst* should be 'under grave suspicion' for the ambivalence in their meaning: either 'spirit, devil, ghost' (as a variant form of *gāst*) or 'guest, stranger, visitor' (cf. *gest*).[80] Moreover, Grendel's mother figures as an antithetical version of Wealhtheow, offering not hospitality, but hostility to her 'hall-guest'.[81] The mere, with its anti-hall—an *ælwihta eard*, 'strange-creatures' dwelling' (1500a) which 'both resembles familiar human spaces and inverts them'—is, like its inhabitants, 'uncanny, simultaneously monstrous and yet familiar'.[82] Like the actions of the cannibalistic Mermedonians in *Andreas*, human behaviour and social practice is grotesquely inverted here.

As has already been noted, one of the defining features of the *locus terribilis* is its 'Unheimlichkeit', its uncanniness. The uncanny ('das Unheimliche'), according to Freud, 'belongs to the realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread', which itself 'goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar'.[83] This interplay between familiarity and dread underpins the concept of the uncanny, which provokes a sense 'of something familiar unexpectedly arising in a strange and unfamiliar context, […] *a sense of homeliness*

[80] Tolkien, 'The Monsters and the Critics', p. 37. Lapidge, 'Psychology of Terror', pp. 377–8, notes the 'probably intentionally ambivalent' use of *gæst* here.
[81] Donoghue, p. 39.
[82] Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, pp. 148–9; cf. Brodeur, *The Art of Beowulf*, p. 95. For earlier accounts of the similarities and distinctions between Heorot and the *niðsele*, see S.L. Dragland, 'Monster-Man in *Beowulf*', *Neophilologus*, 61 (1977), 606–18 (pp. 614–15); and James L. Rosier, 'The Uses of Association: Hands and Feasts in *Beowulf*', *PMLA*, 78 (1963), 8–14 (p. 12).
[83] Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. by David McLintock (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 123–4.

uprooted'.[84] The mere of *Beowulf* is uncanny not only because it 'evokes fear and dread' but precisely because its features 'aris[e] in a strange and unfamiliar context': for instance, all of the features of the *locus amoenus* are present in the mere, but their inverted nature renders them strange and unfamiliar, and yet strangely familiar. What imbues the *niðsele* with a sense of fear and dread, however, is the fact that it is permeated with 'a sense of homeliness uprooted'. Some of the constituent elements of the home place of Heorot find uncanny reflexes in the hostile place of the *niðsele*. This place, then, is both an instance of 'das Unheimliche'—the uncanny—and of 'das Heimliche', which originally denoted the 'domestic' or the 'homely'.[85] That the familiar features of Heorot are uprooted and transplanted into the *niðsele* creates a sense of things being 'out of place', and feeds into the 'psychology of terror' of *Beowulf* identified by Lapidge. The uneasy parallelism between depictions of human social life in Heorot and monstrous antisocial behaviour in the mere unsettles and undermines any certainty about human social space and the central place in which it is enacted.

By considering all of the various elements of the mere and the *niðsele* examined so far, one can see that the entirety of the mere and everything in it represent a complete inversion of Heorot and its own surroundings. At the very centre of Heorot are the *gifstol*, 'gift-seat' (168a), Hrothgar's literal and figurative seat of power, and *maþðum*, 'treasure' (169a), which Grendel cannot approach on his nightly visits to Heorot (168–9).[86] However, though such a seat appears to be lacking in the *niðsele*, the parodic inversion at the centre of Grendel and his mother's dwelling is the many *maðmæhta*, 'treasures, valuables' (1613a), here pointedly without a *gifstol* from which to dispense them, and thus withheld from circulation within human society.

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[84] Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 1 (emphasis added).

[85] *Duden: Das Bedeutungswörterbuch*, ed. by Melanie Kunkel and others, 5th edn (Berlin: Verlag Bibliographisches Institut, 2018), s.v. *heimlich*, *unheimlich*.

[86] Note that *maþðum* might be in apposition here with *gifstol*. On the difficulties of these lines, see *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. 126–7; and Fred C. Robinson, 'Why is Grendel's Not Greeting the *Gifstol* a *Wræc Micel*?', in *Words, Texts and Manuscripts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture Presented to Helmut Gneuss on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. by Michael Korhammer, with Karl Reichl and Hans Sauer (Cambridge: Brewer, 1992), pp. 257–62.

However, it is important to note that Hrothgar too is unable to distribute treasure from his *gifstol* as long as Grendel's depredations continue.[87] The lack of a *gifstol* epitomises what is missing in this hall: a retinue of loyal thegns, or retainers, to whom gifts can be given, and thus an absence of a functioning, cohesive 'hall society'. In contrast, Grendel and his mother, as Fjalldal has noted, are '[l]ike the Danes' only in so far as they 'keep their own court, […] guarded by a band of water-monsters', and of the many *maðmæhta* at their disposal, they 'possess an heirloom, a sword whose hilt records the history of their race',[88] and that of the Flood. This history takes on a greater significance still in the location of their watery abode, not least because the *gylden hilt*, 'golden hilt' (1677a), is deemed to be *enta ærgeweorc*, 'the old work of giants' (1679a), when Beowulf gifts it to Hrothgar.[89]

Further outwards from the central *gifstol* of Heorot stand the benches on which Beowulf, the Geats, and other Danes sleep, paralleled by the *ræst*, 'bed, couch', on which the deceased Grendel lies. The surrounding habitations of Hrothgar's people—such as the *brydbur*, 'women's dwelling' (921a), from which Hrothgar emerges to greet Beowulf and his men upon their first return from the mere—are inverted in the *nicorhusa fela*, 'many dwellings of water-monsters' (1411b), the dwellings of Grendel's mother's fellow inhabitants of the mere. Similarly, the roads leading to Heorot, and the land surrounding it, are inverted in the paths approaching the mere. On the first return to Heorot from the mere, the paths chosen for horse-racing are *foldwegas fægere* […] *cystum cuðe*, 'fair earth-ways […] known for their excellence' (866–7a), and upon the return of the battle party, Hrothgar *medostigge mæt*, 'traversed the mead-(hall-)path' (924a). Likewise, on the second return to Heorot, Beowulf and his men *foldweg mæton, / cuþe stræte*, 'traversed the earth-way, the known road' (1633b–4a), and

[87] Stanley B. Greenfield, '"Gifstol" and Goldhoard in *Beowulf*', in *Old English Studies in Honour of John C. Pope*, ed. by Robert Burlin and Edward Irving Jr (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), p. 111.
[88] Fjalldal, p. 23.
[89] For a discussion of the significance of the flood in *Beowulf*, especially with regards to the mere and the sword-hilt, see Anlezark, *Water and Fire*, pp. 291–367.

Beowulf *medowongas træd*, 'trod the mead-(hall-)plains' (1643b), pointedly a wide, open space.[90] In both instances, the *foldweg*(*as*) and adjacent land are well known, directly associated with the mead-hall that they lead towards and surround. Conversely, the mere and the paths to it are unknown: in Hrothgar's description of it, the mere is *dygel lond*, 'a hidden land' (1357b), accessible only by *frecne fengelad*, 'dangerous fen-paths' (1359a), and in the shorter description of the mere, these paths are *stige nearwe, / enge anpaðas, uncuð gelad*, 'confined paths, narrow passes, unknown ways' (1409b–10), placing them in direct opposition with the *cuþe stræte* found on the approach to Heorot.[91] In short, the *niðsele* and the mere together form a distinct and well-defined place, both on their own terms and by way of opposition to Heorot. The unpleasant topography and climate of the mere make this a *locus terribilis*, which contrasts with the *foldwegas fægere*, 'fair earth-ways', and *medowongas*, 'mead-(hall-)plains', surrounding Heorot. Similarly, Grendel and his mother's roofed, walled 'hostile-hall', with its treasures, sleeping quarters and water-monsters for thanes, is a grotesque inversion of the human social space encapsulated by Heorot. Whilst the discussion in Chapter 1 demonstrated that Heorot is a readily definable place—indeed, arguably the most clearly defined place in the Old English poetic corpus—it is also defined by way of contrast with the *niðsele* inhabited by Grendel and his mother. This contrast, moreover, unsettles the very notion of the central human dwelling place, just as the incursions of Grendel and his mother into Heorot do; and, just as the allusion to the burning of Heorot does, the very existence of Grendel and his mother's anti-hall poses a direct challenge to human society itself.

[90] Note that earlier in the poem the *stræt* is described as *stanfah*, 'stone-paved (lit. '-coloured', '-stained')' (320a), as one might expect for a known (and well-used) road leading to and from Heorot. Speculation about whether or not '[t]he reference could be to paving of the Roman type' or to one of the Scandinavian roads which 'might [have] been paved with small stones' (*Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. 137) seems to be motivated by modern preoccupations with realistic, naturalistic descriptions of the landscape. For a sceptical view of such an interpretation of *stanfah*, see Osborn, 'Laying the Roman Ghost', pp. 246–8.
[91] On the contrast between the unknown paths on the approach to the mere and the known paths on the approach to Heorot, see Bolintineanu, 'Marvelous Spaces', pp. 126–7.

Repurposing place: The dragon's barrow

The penultimate place to be considered in this thesis is the dwelling of the dragon that Beowulf confronts in what is typically recognised as 'Part II' of the poem, concerned chiefly with the hero's fight with the dragon (*Beo* 2200–820) and the aftermath of his death (2821–3182).[92] Just as the nature of Grendel and his mother is determined in no small part by where they dwell, and *vice versa*, so too are the dragon and its lair strongly characterised by each other, and by the treasure that they each protect: indeed, the dragon is referred to as the 'guardian of the barrow' (usually *beorges weard*) on five occasions.[93] And although, like the mere and *niðsele* of Grendel and his mother, the dragon's lair is depicted in terms which resemble the hall of Heorot, it will be shown below in which ways the dragon's *eorðsele*, 'earth-hall', differs from the *niðsele* in the mere, and how this might affect our understanding of the dragon's lair.[94]

The dragon's abode is described variously in *Beowulf* as *beorg/beorh* (12 times)—either 'hill', as in *Guthlac A*, or 'barrow', the inescapable meaning here—and *hlæw* (3 times), likewise either 'barrow' or 'mound'.[95] The *beorg* was first identified, ostensibly, as a

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[92] Although this structural division is given by the editors in their summary of the poem in *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. xxv, they interrogate the idea of the poem's bi- and/or tripartite structure at pp. lxxix–lxxxiii. For further discussion of the poem's structure, see Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 91–7, and references there. The final place to be discussed will be Beowulf's burial mound.

[93] Garner, *Structuring Spaces*, p. 59. See lines 2304b, 2524b, 2580b, 2841b–2a, and 3066b. For assessments of the nature of the dragon itself, see Alan K. Brown, 'The Firedrake in *Beowulf*', *Neophilologus*, 64 (1980), 439–60; Arthur E. DuBois, 'The Dragon in *Beowulf*', *PMLA*, 72 (1957), 819–22; Thomas L. Keller, 'The Dragon in *Beowulf* Reconsidered', *Aevum*, 55 (1981), 218–28; *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. xlvi–xlvii; Howard Shilton, 'The Nature of Beowulf's Dragon', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 79 (1997), 67–77; Kenneth Sisam, 'Beowulf's Fight with the Dragon', *RES*, 9 (1958), 129–40 (pp. 133–4); and Raymond P. Tripp Jr's idiosyncratic and controversial *More About the Fight With the Dragon: Beowulf 2208b–3182, Commentary, Edition, and Translation* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983). For comparison of the dragon of *Beowulf* with parallels and analogues in both the Germanic and the Latin traditions, see Paul Acker, 'Death by Dragons', *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia*, 8 (2012), 1–21; Goldsmith, pp. 124–45; *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. xlv–xlvi; Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 149–51; and Christine Rauer, *Beowulf and the Dragon: Parallels and Analogues* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000), esp. pp. 24–51; for a more general overview of dragons in Anglo-Saxon England, see Flight, *Basilisks and Beowulf*, pp. 89–117.

[94] Garner, *Structuring Spaces*, p. 57. For a summary of the presentation of the dragon's lair, see John D. Niles, '*Beowulf* 2545b–2549: The Stream that Burst into Flame at the Dragon's Barrow', in *Translating the Past: Essays on Medieval Literature in Honor of Marijane Osborn*, ed. by Jane Beal and Mark Bradshaw Busbee (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2012), pp. 26–8.

[95] Respectively at lines 2213a (*stanbeorh*), 2241b, 2299b, 2304b, 2322b, 2524b, 2529a, 2546a, 2559a, 2580b, 2755b, and 2842a; and 2296b, 2411a, and 2773a. See Bosworth–Toller, s.v. *beorg*, *hlæw*; *DOE*, s.v. *beorg*,

'chambered long barrow' over a century and a half ago by John Thurnam in his study of prehistoric barrows in the South of England.[96] In his own treatment of the dragon's lair, William Lawrence likewise concluded that the *beorg* 'is clearly of the artificial variety', and not simply a naturally occurring elevation.[97] Like Thurnam, though, Lawrence believed that 'It is possible […], by piecing together the scattered allusions in the poem, to get a definite picture of the barrow, and form a correct idea of the archæological type to which it belongs', a conviction which led him to proclaim, 'There can be no doubt […]—it is a megalithic passage grave', and specifically of a type found in Scandinavia, not in Britain.[98] It is certainly not the purpose of this discussion to reach any such conclusion about the type of barrow depicted in *Beowulf*, not least because Emily Thornbury has emphatically shown, in response to Lawrence in particular, that 'traditional critical insistence on the real-world accuracy of the description of the dragon's lair must be abandoned', since the barrow 'is, rather, a construct, formed of disparate materials, each with its own set of associations'.[99] The only '"facts"' concerning the dragon's barrow that Thornbury is willing to admit are that the many references to *stan* show that it is made of stone, and that it is 'man-made' since it is *nearocræftum fæst*, 'secured by restrictive designs' (2243b).[100] In fact, several other features of the barrow suggest that it is a man-made structure, features which have important ramifications for our understanding of this place. However, to say that the dragon's barrow *is* made of stone and *is* man-made is, of course,

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hlæw. For the charter and place-name evidence for these topographical terms, see Semple, *Perceptions of the Prehistoric*, pp. 160–4; and Smith, *English Place-name Elements*, I, pp. 29–30, 248–50.

[96] John Thurnam, 'On Ancient British Barrows, especially Those of Wiltshire and the Adjoining Counties (Part I. Long Barrows)', *Archaeologia: Or Miscellaneous Tracts Relating to Antiquity*, 42 (1869), 161–244 (pp. 202–4). In his 'classification of barrows', Thurnam, p. 168, placed such long barrows in the 'Stone period'. For archaeological discussion of Anglo-Saxon burial mounds, see Hilda R. Ellis Davidson, 'The Hill of the Dragon: Anglo-Saxon Burial Mounds in Literature and Archaeology', *Folklore*, 61 (1950), 169–85; Semple, 'A Fear of the Past'; and, specifically concerning Sutton Hoo, Rupert Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial*, 3 vols (London: British Museum Publications, 1975–1983).

[97] William W. Lawrence, 'The Dragon and His Lair in *Beowulf*', *PMLA*, 33 (1918), 547–83 (p. 569).

[98] Lawrence, 'The Dragon and His Lair', pp. 572–7, at 572, 574. For a summary of past interpretations of the supposed historicity of the dragon's barrow, see Emily V. Thornbury, '*Eald enta geweorc* and the Relics of Empire: Revisiting the Dragon's Lair in *Beowulf*', *Quaestio*, 1 (2000), 82–92 (pp. 82–3).

[99] Thornbury, 'Revisiting the Dragon's Lair', p. 91.

[100] Thornbury, 'Revisiting the Dragon's Lair', pp. 84–5; my translation.

a convenient linguistic shorthand: as a poetic construct, it should perhaps go without saying, the barrow exists solely in the text and in the mind's eye. Moreover, the *Beowulf*-poet was no more concerned with presenting an archaeologically accurate Neolithic grave mound here—or an elite Anglo-Saxon burial mound, for that matter—than he was with depicting an architecturally realistic sixth-century royal hall in the case of Heorot.[101] And just as early attempts to smooth out apparent inconsistencies in the topography of the mere were doomed to fail, so too are efforts to identify a specific type of Neolithic barrow to miss the point of the dragon's dwelling altogether. It is the conceptualisation of place and its rich assortment of connotations within the poetic corpus—and beyond it—that are of primary significance in the poet's description of the dragon's lair.[102]

In addition to repeated references to the dragon's dwelling as either *beorg* or *hlæw*, when the dragon first takes up residence in the barrow, the poem further states that, like any dragon, *He gesecean* ***sceall / hearh on hrusan****, þær he hæðen* ***gold*** */ warað wintrum* ***frod***, 'It must seek out a heathen sanctuary in the earth, where, old in winters, it guards heathen gold' (2275b–7a).[103] A comparison with the dragon described in *Maxims II* 26b–7a would suggest that the dragon of *Beowulf* conforms very much to type: *Draca* ***sceal on hlæwe, / frod, frætwum*** *wlanc*, 'A dragon must be in a mound, wise, proud of its treasures' (*Max II* 26b–7a). Whether its dwelling is a barrow or, more precisely, a *hearh*, 'heathen sanctuary', the dragon of *Beowulf* inhabits what appears to be some sort of man-made, pre-Christian mound, though it is also described with the more ambiguous terms, *denn*, 'den, lair' (2759b, 3045a), and *eorðscrafa*, 'earth-caves' (3046a), a word also used of the Wife's dwelling in *The Wife's*

[101] For discussion of the use of prehistoric barrows in early Anglo-Saxon burials, though, see Howard Williams, 'Ancient Landscapes and the Dead: The Reuse of Prehistoric and Roman Monuments as Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites', *Medieval Archaeology*, 41 (1997), 1–32; and Semple, *Perceptions of the Prehistoric*, pp. 48–51.
[102] Sisam, 'Beowulf's Fight with the Dragon', p. 132.
[103] In defence of the reading *hearh*, one of numerous challenging readings in this especially damaged part of the manuscript, see R.D. Fulk, 'Some Contested Readings in the *Beowulf* Manuscript', *RES*, n.s. 56 (2005), 192–223 (p. 199).

Lament 28b and 36b.[104] Nonetheless, the barrow is also given a number of other epithets which liken it not to the final resting place of some long-departed heathen, nor to an ostensibly naturally occurring cave, but to the centre of human social space—the hall: *eorðsele*, 'earth-hall' (2232a, 2410a, 2515a),[105] *eorðreced*, 'earth-hall' (2719a), *dryhtsele*, 'noble hall' (2320a), *hordærn*, 'hoard-hall' (2297b, 2831b), *hringsele*, 'an (arm-)ring hall' (2840a, 3053a), *recedes geatwa*, 'hall of treasures' (3088a), and simply *sele*, 'hall' (3128b). Like the countless such epithets given to Heorot discussed in Chapter 1, these epithets highlight the barrow's physical location (namely, under the earth), its nobility, and its importance as a place not where treasure is distributed but, crucially in this case, where it is kept out of circulation.[106] Of these epithets, *dryhtsele* (485a, 767a) and *hringsele* are both used of Heorot (2010a), and *hordærn* echoes another of Heorot's epithets, *hordburh*, 'hoard-stronghold' (467a). The presence of a dragon in such lordly surroundings is clearly meant to unsettle the poem's audience through its evocations of Heorot, a hall destroyed in the end by fire, and of Beowulf's own hall, burnt down by the dragon itself.[107] However, that the dragon's own dwelling place was built by humans is made abundantly clear by these epithets and by the—albeit at times allusive—descriptions of the barrow and its architectural features, discussed below.

What few clues are given about the barrow's location suggest that it is somewhere remote and difficult to reach: *Beorh eall gearo / wunode on wonge wæteryðum neah, / niwe be næsse, nearocræftum fæst*, 'A barrow was situated all ready on the land near the watery waves,

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[104] As Garner, *Structuring Spaces*, p. 62, notes, the dragon's dwelling is described as *eorðscrafa*, 'earth-caves', only at the moment of its death, i.e. when its dwelling becomes its grave. As was discussed in Chapter 2, *eorðscræf* can mean 'grave', as it does in *The Wanderer* 84a.

[105] Cf. also *Wif* 29a.

[106] Victor I. Scherb, 'Setting and Cultural Memory in Part II of *Beowulf*', *ES*, 79 (1998), 109–19 (p. 113). For discussions of the dragon's treasure, and of treasure in barrows more generally, see Earl R. Anderson, 'Treasure Trove in *Beowulf:* A Legal View of the Dragon's Hoard', *Mediaevalia*, 3 (1977), 141–64; L.V. Grinsell, 'Barrow Treasure, in Fact, Tradition and Legislation', *Folklore*, 78 (1967), 1–38 (pp. 1–6); Lawrence, 'The Dragon and His Lair', pp. 550–69; Sisam, 'Beowulf's Fight with the Dragon', pp. 129–31; and Paul Beekman Taylor, 'The Dragon's Treasure in *Beowulf*', *NM*, 98 (1997), 229–40.

[107] For an examination of the Christian symbolism in the opposition between the dragon and the hart signified by Heorot, see Robert Lawrence Schichler, 'Heorot and Dragon-Slaying in *Beowulf*', *Proceedings of the Patristic, Medieval and Renaissance Conference*, 11 (1986), 159–75.

new by a headland, secured by restrictive designs' (2241b–3).[108] That it is 'secured by restrictive designs'—in other words, deliberately difficult to access—indicates that it has been built by a previous generation out of the way of human settlement. This is emphasised by the fact that ***stig*** *under læg / eldum* ***uncuð***, 'a path lay below [the barrow], *unknown to humans*' (2213b–14a), no doubt unknown because of the very ***nearo****cræftas*, 'restrictive designs', which make it hard to reach.[109] The dragon's barrow, then, is like Grendel and his mother's mere with its own ***stige nearwe****, / enge anpaðas,* ***uncuð*** *gelad*, 'confined paths, narrow passes, unknown ways' (*Beo* 1409b–10).[110] And, like Grendel's forebear, Cain, who *westen warode*, 'occupied the desert' (*Beo* 1265a), the dragon's lair is also to be found *on þam westenne*, 'in the desert' (2298a), in other words, in a remote, uncultivated and otherwise uninhabited place. This location accords well with that of the dragon described in Aldhelm's poetic *De virginitate*, in which a dragon is exiled from its *obscurum tigillum*, 'dark habitation' (also described as a *cripta*, 'cave, crypt') to *vacuas* […] *salebras*, 'empty wastelands', and *incultis* […] *arvis*, 'uncultivated fields'.[111] The contrast between such a remote, uninhabited place and the hall is brought into sharp focus in the 'lay' of the so-called Last Survivor (2247–66), who, in depositing the treasures of his deceased kith and kin in the barrow, laments the absence of the defining features of hall life: *seledreamas*, 'hall-joys' (2252a), *hwa sweord wege*, 'anyone who carries the sword' (2252b), and the rhyming *fæted wæge*, 'decorated cup' (2253b), the *duguð*, 'troop' (2254b), and *hearpan wyn, / gomen gleobeames*, 'the joy of the lyre, entertainment of the joy-wood' (2262b–3a).[112] This absence of communal life calls to mind not just the Wanderer's *ubi sunt* lament, but the depiction of life in Heorot throughout the first half of

[108] Cf. *Beo* 2410–12a.
[109] Cf. *dryhtsele dyrnne*, 'the secret noble hall' (2320a), which also highlights its concealed location.
[110] *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. cii.
[111] Flight, p. 93. See Aldhelm, *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. by Ehwald, II, pp. 450–1; and Aldhelm, *The Poetic Works*, trans. by Michael Lapidge and James L. Rosier (Cambridge: Brewer, 1985; repr. 2009), pp. 156; Lapidge and Rosier point out that *tigillum*, literally 'beam', means 'habitation' here.
[112] Garner, *Structuring Spaces*, pp. 58–9. On 'the artful nature of this set-piece', including the use of paronomasia and rhyme, see Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 227–8, at 228.

Beowulf.[113] All that will remain of this now lost, idealised society is the hoard of treasures given up to the barrow by the Last Survivor—a poignant comment on the transience of all earthly things, and an ominous foreshadowing of the downfall of the Geats.[114]

Concerning the physical features of the barrow, it is consistently depicted using architectural vocabulary. In the first mention of the place, the dragon is said to watch over both a treasure hoard *on heaum hofe*, 'in a high building' (2212a), and over *stanbeorh stearcne*, 'the secure stone-barrow' (2213a).[115] *Hof* is a word used exclusively of human constructions, whether above or below ground, and although its use here could be metaphorical, it strongly suggests that the barrow, or at least the barrow's interior, is man-made.[116] Indeed, when Beowulf enters the barrow, he studies the interior architectural features of this *hof*: *Geseah ða be wealle* […] */ stondan stanbogan*, 'He then saw by the wall […] stone-arches standing' (2542a, 2545a), which, Niles suggests, 'seems to be a primitive form of vaulting'.[117] As well as emphasising the building material used in the barrow—stone—these lines are mirrored in Beowulf's dying moments after the fight with the dragon, creating an envelope pattern in this critical part of the narrative (repeated words in bold):

Ða se æðeling giong,
þæt he **bi wealle** wishycgende
gesæt on sesse; **seah** on enta geweorc,
hu ða **stanbogan** stapulum fæste
ece eorðreced innan healde.

[113] Scherb, p. 116. On the Survivor's reflections on loss, see Janet Thormann, 'The Poetics of Absence: "The Lament of the Sole Survivor" in *Beowulf*', in *De Gustibus: Essays for Alain Renoir*, ed. by John Miles Foley (New York: Garland, 1992), pp. 542–50. Cf. Beowulf's own elegiac lines in his first speech before attacking the dragon in lines 2444–62a, esp. 2455–9.
[114] Bonjour, *The Digressions in Beowulf*, p. 69. See also Magennis, *Images of Community*, pp. 69–73.
[115] On the proposed readings *heaum hofe* and *stearcne* here, see Fulk, 'Some Contested Readings', pp. 210–11.
[116] *DOE*, s.v. *hof*.
[117] Niles, 'The Stream that Burst into Flame', p. 27. On the potentially ambiguous meaning of *stanbogan*, a *hapax legomenon*, see Sisam, 'Beowulf's Fight with the Dragon', pp. 131–2; and Thornbury, 'Revisiting the Dragon's Lair', pp. 85–6.

[Then the prince went,
the one wise in thought, so that he could sit
on a seat by the wall; he gazed on the work of giants,
how those stone-arches fixed to pillars
supported the eternal earth-hall from within.] (*Beo* 2715b–19)

Once again, Beowulf sees *bi wealle*, 'by the wall' (2716a), how the *stanbogan*, 'stone-arches', which are fixed to *stapulum*, 'pillars' (2718), support the barrow from within. When Wiglaf enters the barrow shortly after this, he goes *under beorges hrof*, 'under the roof of the barrow' (2755b),[118] highlighting yet another apparent architectural feature of the place, one shared with the *hrofsele*, 'roofed hall' (1515a), of Grendel and his mother. More significantly, though, Beowulf gazes on *enta geweorc*, 'the work of giants' (2717b), a collocation used exclusively in the poetic corpus of artificial works, and especially of ruined buildings, such that the barrow is itself presented as 'a conventionalized ruin'.[119] As was discussed in the last chapter, lines 1492–5a of *Andreas* contain a number of borrowings from this passage, including *enta geweorc*, and describe the moment just as Andrew is about to unleash the purifying flood against the Mermedonians. In stark contrast with this saintly triumph, the lines in *Beowulf* describe the hero's downfall, presaged by the bursting forth of a stream *heaðofyrum hat*, 'hot with battle-flames' (*Beo* 2547a), perhaps referring, as John Niles has argued, to a flaming stream emanating from the dragon itself.[120] As well as demonstrating once more the *Andreas*-poet's capacity for repurposing his borrowings from *Beowulf* in novel contexts, these lines also suggest something of the *Romanitas* of the barrow, much like the apparent *Romanitas* of the city of Mermedonia in *Andreas*.

The barrow's Roman colouring, initially noted by Brodeur, has been further explored by Thornbury, for whom the description of ***stream*** *ut þonan / brecan of beorge*, 'a stream

[118] Cf. *inwithrof*, 'malice-roof' (*Beo* 3123b).
[119] Scherb, p. 115.
[120] Niles, 'The Stream that Burst into Flame', pp. 25–36, esp. 29–34; cf. Brodeur, *The Art of Beowulf*, p. 127.

bursting forth from the barrow' and *þære burnan* ***wealm*** */ heaðofyrum* ***hat***, 'the brook's current hot with battle-flames' (2545b–7a), 'rather reminds one' of the description of the Roman baths in *The Ruin* 38b–9a: ***stream hate*** *wearp / widan* ***wylme***, 'a stream flowed with heat, in a wide surge'.[121] Indeed, this is but one of a number of parallels in this part of *Beowulf* with *The Ruin*, of which a number are also shared with *Andreas* 836–43a, and examined in detail in Chapter 3. The first of these is *enta geweorc*, 'the work of giants' (*Beo* 2717b), which also occurs, with slight variation, in *The Ruin* 2b and in *Andreas* 1235a and 1495a, where it refers to Roman baths and to a Mediterranean city, respectively. The next is the appearance in each of these texts of one or more *weal*(*l*)*as* (*Beo* 2307b, 2323a, 2526a, 2542a, 2716a, 2759a, 3060a, 3090a, and 3103a; *Ruin* 1a; *And* 843a).[122] Although Thornbury notes that the Latin origin of the repeated word *weall* (from *vallum*, 'wall, rampart, fortification') 'make[s] a link to Roman ruins a natural interpretation of the text', it seems highly unlikely that any monastic reader of, let alone a courtly listener to, *Beowulf* would have been aware of this etymology, not least because the borrowing took place in Proto-Germanic, not in Old English (though a learned or attentive reader may have noted the phonetic similarity between the two words).[123] However, the presence of walls, which the poem repeatedly states are made of stone—not wood—might well have been understood as implying Roman origins. The final, more clearly Roman feature highlighted by Thornbury is to be found in the hoard itself, which, like the sword hilt take from the *niðsele*, is also described as *eald enta geweorc*, 'the old work of giants' (*Beo* 2774a): *segn eall gylden / heah ofer horde, hondwundra mæst, / gelocen leoðocræftum; of ðam leoma stod*,

[121] Brodeur, *The Art of Beowulf*, p. 127; Thornbury, 'Revisiting the Dragon's Lair', pp. 88–91, at 91.
[122] Most striking of these is the similarity between the half-lines *wrætte under wealle*, 'ornaments within the wall[s]' (*Beo* 3060a; cf. 3103a), and *Wrætlic is þes wealstan*, 'Wondrous is this wall-stone' (*Ruin* 1a). Note that the instance at line 3090a occurs in the compound *eorðweall*.
[123] Thornbury, 'Revisiting the Dragon's Lair', p. 89; *A Latin Dictionary. Founded on Andrews' Edition of Freund's Latin Dictionary*, ed. and rev. by Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), s.v. *vallum*; Philip Durkin, *Borrowed Words: A History of Loanwords in English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 111. On earlier Latin loanwords in PGmc, see Don Ringe, *From Proto-Indo-European to Proto-Germanic*, 2nd edn, A Linguistic History of English, 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 328–9.

‘a banner all of gold, high over the hoard, greatest of hand-worked wonders, woven together with the skill of hands; light shone from it’ (2767b–9a); it is also described as *segn* […] / *beacna beorhtost*, ‘a standard […], brightest of beacons’ (2776b–7a). This golden standard could well have connoted to the poem’s audience a Roman *vexillum*, ‘a popular metonym for victory in Anglo-Latin poetry’, though Beowulf’s victory here is a Pyrrhic one.[124] Lastly, whilst certainly not distinctly Roman in their associations, there are two more parallels between this part of *Beowulf* and both *The Ruin* and *Andreas* 836–43a. The first is the reference, noted above, to the dragon’s barrow as a *hof* (*Beo* 2212a), a word which also describes the Roman buildings in *The Ruin* 29b and the Mermedonian buildings in *Andreas* 838b; the second is the formula also discussed above, *under harne stan* (*Beo* 2553b, 2744b), over which water flows in *The Ruin* 43a, and which serves as a boundary marker in *Andreas* 841b. In addition, just as lines 2545–7a and 2715b–19 in *Beowulf* create an envelope pattern, so too do these instances of *under harne stan*, which function once again as both literal and narrative boundary markers, signalling the boundary between the barrow and the space around it, and bracketing off Beowulf’s confrontation with the dragon within the narrative sequence. With the exception of the golden standard, there is nothing especially Roman about any of these features when they are considered individually. However, their cumulative effect is at least to suggest something of the Anglo-Saxons’ Roman inheritance in Britain, in the same way that *The Ruin* clearly evokes Britain’s Roman past. More important than the specifically Roman characteristics of either of these places, though, are the deliberate evocation of a past civilisation and the corollary that all things must, necessarily, pass.

To conclude this part of the discussion, it is worth considering how the dragon’s barrow relates, or does not relate, to the two other principal places in *Beowulf*. Like the mere of Grendel and his mother which is marked by a *harne stan* (1415a), so too is the dragon’s barrow (2553b,

[124] Thornbury, ‘Revisiting the Dragon’s Lair’, pp. 89–91, at 90.

2744b). Grendel and his mother's underwater dwelling place is also characterised by several, albeit in themselves fairly unremarkable, architectural and domestic features: there are walls (*be wealle*, 1573a), a roof (*hrofsele*, 1515a), a bed or couch (*on ræste*, 1585b), and a source of light (*fyrleoht*, 1516b). The dragon's barrow, likewise located underground, is characterised by the same features: there are multiple references to walls (*on wealle*, 2307b, etc.), and there is a roof (*beorges hrof*, 2755b; *inwithrof*, 3123b), a seat (*on sesse*, 1717a), and a source of reflected light in the form of a conceivably Roman battle standard (*segn eall gylden*, 2767b, etc.). This *segn eall gylden*, 'banner all of gold' (2767b), is described, like the barrow itself, as *eald enta geweorc* (2774a). Similarly, the *gylden hilt*, 'golden hilt' (1677a)—one of the many *maðmæhta*, 'treasures, valuables' (1613a), found in Grendel's mother's home—is also deemed to be *enta ærgeweorc*, 'the old work of giants' (1679a). But these superficial similarities mask a striking difference between the two places, noted by Brodeur, who observed that the *Beowulf*-poet did not 'envelop [the dragon's] lair in the trappings of terror, as [he] had enveloped the Haunted Mere'.[125] Despite the outright hostility of its current resident, the dragon's barrow is defined principally by the stonework of its builders and of the goldsmiths who produced the hoard that it contains. The link between the barrow and long deceased humans is underscored by the sense of loss pervading the 'lay' of the Last Survivor, the various epithets which present the barrow as some kind of hall, and the apparent *Romanitas* of the place. The dwelling of Grendel and his mother, however, despite the treasures and golden hilt found within it, and despite the similar allusions to the place's hall-like nature, is characterised chiefly by its monstrous inhabitants and by the complete absence of any functional 'hall society'. So hostile and loathsome is Grendel and his mother's abode, in fact, that it is called a *niðsele*, 'hostile hall' (1513a), and its hostility extends to the *locus terribilis* of the mere beyond. The only explicit indication that the dragon's barrow might be a hostile place, though, is that it has a

[125] Brodeur, *The Art of Beowulf*, pp. 126–7, at 127.

inwithrof, 'malice-roof' (3123b), a *hapax legomenon* the precise meaning of which is rather ambiguous.[126] Perhaps the many apparent similarities between the dragon's barrow and Heorot would have been sufficiently unsettling for the Anglo-Saxon audiences of *Beowulf*, not least because the dragon razes Beowulf's own hall—and his throne—to the ground: *his sylfes ham, / bolda selest brynewylmum mealt, gifstol Geata*, 'his own home, the best of dwellings, the gift-throne of the Geats, had been consumed by burning flame' (*Beo* 2325b–7a). However, just as the burnings of Heorot and of Beowulf's hall stand for the transience of all earthly places and things, so too is Beowulf's gazing *on enta geweorc*, 'on the work of giants' (2717b), in his dying moments a reflection on the passing of those 'giants', and of himself and his own people, a fact which should hardly be surprising at this late stage in Beowulf's career, after fifty years of ostensibly good kingship.[127] It is this commentary on transience, arguably, which is the real significance—if one can assert such a thing about a poem like *Beowulf*—of the dragon, its hoard and especially its barrow.[128] The elegiac tone of the lay of the Last Survivor (2247–66), who laments the fall of his society using the same rhetorical features found in the elegies proper, frames how the ensuing descriptions of the dragon's mound ought to be interpreted. That the dragon's lair resembles not just any hall but Heorot itself, a place doomed to be destroyed, and that it evokes something of Britain's Roman past, albeit somewhat allusively, strongly suggests that this place is, like all monuments, a monument to transience. Such an interpretation is borne out, moreover, by the many similarities between the dragon's barrow and Beowulf's own burial mound.

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[126] For an allegorical Christian interpretation of the word, see Carl T. Berkhout, '*Beowulf* 3123b: Under the Malice-Roof', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 9 (1973), 428–31.

[127] In contrast with positive appraisals of Beowulf's kingship such as R.E. Kaske, '*Sapientia et Fortitudo* as the Controlling Theme of *Beowulf*', *SP*, 55 (1958), 423–56 (esp. pp. 445–55), John Leyerle, 'Beowulf the Hero and the King', *Medium Ævum*, 34 (1965), 89–102, offers a rather more sceptical assessment; cf. Orchard's conclusion about Beowulf's 'prodigious pride' in his *Pride and Prodigies,* p. 171. For more nuanced approaches to the question of Beowulf's heroism and kingship, see Scott Gwara, *Heroic Identity in the World of Beowulf*, Medieval and Renaissance Authors and Texts, 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 1–58; and Francis Leneghan, *The Dynastic Drama of Beowulf* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2020), pp. 15–18.

[128] For a summary of critics' comments concerning the inherent ambiguity of *Beowulf*, see Leneghan, p. 17, n. 78; for a more sustained treatment of this idea, see Gwara, pp. 1–8.

Place and commemoration: Beowulf's burial mound

The final place to be considered in this discussion is Beowulf's burial mound, arguably the most important place in the whole of *Beowulf* not least because it is last mentioned in line 3169a, just thirteen lines from the end of the poem. As Fred Robinson points out, this was evidently the opinion of an early editor of *Beowulf*, Nikolai S.V. Grundtvig, who, following Beowulf himself, named the poem not simply *Beowulf* but *Beowulfes Beorh*; he also wrote a poem of his own in which he likened the mound to the poem itself, since both committed Beowulf's fame to posterity.[129] The mound is envisaged by Beowulf before he utters his final words to Wiglaf (*Beo* 2813–16), instructing his retainer to tell his fellow warriors

> hlæw gewyrcean
> beorhtne æfter bæle æt brimes nosan;
> se scel to gemyndum minum leodum
> heah hlifian on Hrones Næsse,
> þæt hit sæliðend syððan hatan
> Biowulfes Biorh, ða ðe brentingas
> ofer floda genipu feorran drifað.
>
> [to erect a mound,
> bright after the pyre, on the promontory [in] the sea;
> it shall tower high on Whale's Headland,
> as a memorial for my people,
> so that seafarers will afterwards call it
> Beowulf's Barrow, those who steer ships
> over the flood's mists from afar.] (*Beo* 2802b–8)

In its topography, Beowulf's burial mound bears a number of similarities with the dragon's mound.[130] Here, it too is described as a *hlæw* (2802b; cf. 3157a) and, in a toponym, as a *biorh* (2807a; cf. 3097b, 3143a, 3163a), both evidently referring to the artificial mound erected over

[129] *Beowulfes beorh eller Bjovulfs-drapen, det old-angelske helte digt, paa grund-sproget*, ed. by Nikolai S.V. Grundtvig (Copenhagen: Karl Schönbergs Forlag, 1861); Fred C. Robinson, 'The Tomb of Beowulf', in his *The Tomb of Beowulf and Other Essays on Old English* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 5–6; for Robinson's discussion and translation of Grundtvig's poem, see pp. 299–303.
[130] Garner, *Structuring Spaces*, pp. 63–4; Scherb, pp. 114–19.

Beowulf's remains after the funeral pyre, and not to a naturally occurring elevation.[131] Like the dragon's hoard which lies *on heaum hofe*, 'in a high building' (2212a), in a mound *niwe be næsse*, 'new by a headland' (2243a), Beowulf's mound is located *æt brimes nosan*, 'on the promontory [in] the sea', where it shall *heah hlifian, on Hrones Næsse*, 'tower high on Whale's Headland' (2803b, 2805).[132] Moreover, although it is a rather mundane detail, the *wealle*, 'wall' (3161a), which Beowulf's men build around Beowulf's remains is another feature shared with the dragon's mound.[133] Lastly, although it is only the Roman *vexillum* in the dragon's mound which is referred to as *beacna beorhtost*, 'brightest of beacons' (2777a), Beowulf's men are instructed to build *hlæw* […] */ beorhtne*, 'a bright mound' (2802b–3a), which will be filled *beorhtum byrnum*, 'with bright byrnies' (3140a), amongst other treasures.[134] Where the dragon's mound is significant only for the bright treasures that it contains, Beowulf's resting place is bright both within and without, literally a beacon for the 'seafarers who will afterwards call it Beowulf's Barrow'.[135] The prominence and visibility of the barrow, both in terms of its height and breadth, is also emphasised elsewhere: Wiglaf orders Beowulf's people to construct *in bælstede beorh þone hean, / micelne ond mærne*, 'a high barrow in the pyre-place, large and glorious' (3097–8a), and they dutifully do so, building *hlæw on hoe, se wæs heah ond brad*, 'a barrow on the promontory, which was high and wide' (3157).[136] The striking parallels between

[131] On the bipartite nature of Beowulf's obsequies, which consist of his cremation and then his interment in the mound, see *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. 269–70; and Robinson, 'The Tomb of Beowulf'.

[132] That the mound towers on the land *on Hrones Næsse* as a beacon for those who sail *ofer floda genipu*, '*over* the flood's mists' (2808a), is perhaps a deliberate contrast with the topography of the mere, in which a stream *under næssa genipu niþer gewiteð, / flod under foldan*, 'plunges down *under* the headlands' mists, water *under* the earth' (1360–1a).

[133] For a defence of the purportedly 'curious' and 'confused redundancy' of the erecting of this walled monument as an instance of apotheosis, see Robinson, 'The Tomb of Beowulf', pp. 3–19, at 6.

[134] Orchard, *Critical Companion*, p. 37, notes the Old Norse 'commonplace' of bright, treasure-containing pagan burial mounds, often situated on the coast, as discussed by J. Michael Stitt, *Beowulf and the Bear's Son: Epic, Saga, and Fairytale in Northern Germanic Tradition*, Albert Bates Lord Studies in Oral Literature, 8 (New York: Garland, 1992), pp. 129–69.

[135] The link between the two mounds is strengthened further by the placing of treasure from the dragon's hoard into Beowulf's mound in lines 3163–8. Citing Aldhelm's *Enigma* XCII (*Farus editissima*, 'loftiest lighthouse'), as evidence of knowledge of such structures, Neville, p. 138, even suggests that Beowulf's mound might be 'a kind of lighthouse'.

[136] For the reading *hlæw on hoe*, see Fulk, 'Some Contested Readings', pp. 203–4. Cf. the heathens in both Ælfric's and Wulfstan's *De falsiis diis*, who worship Woden *to heagum beorgum*, 'on/in high barrows'. See

the dwelling place of Beowulf's bane and his own resting place might, at first glance, seem jarring, but they highlight one of the central themes of *Beowulf*, touched on throughout this thesis: the transience of place.

In his optimistic interpretation of Beowulf's burial mound, which he calls an 'emble[m] of cultural […] continuity', Victor Scherb understandably sees the mound as a fitting tribute to Beowulf's heroism in life.[137] However, there is something rather poignant in likening Beowulf's own barrow to one originally containing the treasure hoard of a long-departed people, one which had since become the home of a covetous dragon. Although Beowulf slays this dragon, which withholds its treasure from circulation amongst people, Beowulf dies in the process and is buried with that very treasure in a similar mound, perpetuating its exclusion from circulation. The end result of this is simply the displacement of the hoard from one location to another, essentially indistinguishable one. And whilst it is Beowulf's hope that his barrow will serve as a landmark to sailors and as a memorial for his people, the *exemplum* of the dragon's barrow has clearly not been apprehended: everyone and everything passes out of memory until by chance, perhaps, someone—or something—rediscovers that which had earlier been lost. The distinct possibility remains, of course, that after the downfall of the Geats anticipated in the Geatish woman's lament (3150–5a), another dragon will chance upon Beowulf's barrow and claim the treasure within as its own. This parallelism of place underscores the theme of transience which runs throughout *Beowulf*, and responds in particular to the development of the theme in the lay of the Last Survivor in lines 2247–66. Just as the Last Survivor's people passed out of living memory, so too will the Geats. Thus, whilst

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Ælfric, *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, ed. by John C. Pope, 2 vols, EETS, o.s. 259–260 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967–1968), II, p. 684; and Wulfstan, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, ed. by Dorothy Bethurum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), pp. 223, and 338–9 on the connection of barrows to Woden.

[137] Scherb, pp. 111, 114–19. See references above for more cautious views of Beowulf's heroism. Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 37–9, notes the construction of heroic monuments at the end of the Old English *Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*—on the folio before the one on which *Beowulf* begins—and in its Latin source (section 41), and in the *Liber monstrorum* I.12.

Beowulf's barrow may well act as a site of collective memory for a time, ultimately, like the dragon's mound, it is a symbol of the fleetingness of all earthly things, to be concealed from prying eyes *nefne God sylfa*, 'unless God himself' (3054b), reveals it. And although Heaven is not mentioned here, the poem's narrator avers that, unlike a dead king, useless to his people, only God can truly save mankind: *sigora soðcyning,* [...] */ he is manna gehyld*, 'the true king of victories, He is the protection of mankind' (3055–6a).

Finally, the significance of Beowulf's barrow—the location of the closing moments of the narrative—also lies in the ways in which it is both like and unlike Heorot, the very first place described in *Beowulf*.[138] Whilst the occurrence of a funeral at the beginning and the end of the poem has been widely recognised as a structuring device—an envelope pattern enclosing the entire poem—the marking of the beginning and the end of the poem's primary narrative (i.e. the exploits of Beowulf) with two comparable places has not, as far as I am aware, been noted before.[139] In addition to being linked by a couple of overt verbal parallels, Heorot and Beowulf's burial mound are described in similar ways more generally. In both instances, men are ordered *gewyrcean* 'to build' (69b, 2802b), the respective structures, whilst their kings appear to take the credit by naming them: where Hrothgar *scop him Heort naman*, 'created for it [the hall] the name Heor(o)t' (78b), Beowulf anticipates that *hit sæliðend syððan hatan Biowulfes Biorh*, 'seafarers will afterwards call it [the mound] Beowulf's Barrow' (2806–7a). In each case, the act of naming underlines the act of establishing and of memorialising, respectively. A more readily apparent parallel, the expression *heah hlifian* (2308b) echoes the phrase used of Heorot's own physical stature at the beginning of the poem: *sele hlifade / heah*, 'the hall towered high' (81b–2a).[140] As was discussed in Chapter 1, Heorot's height and

[138] Excluding the passing mention of *Scedeland*, 'Scania', in line 19b.

[139] On the opening and closing funerals, see e.g. Orchard, *Critical Companion*, pp. 91–2; and Gale R. Owen-Crocker, *The Four Funerals in Beowulf and the Structure of the Poem* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), esp. pp. 2–3.

[140] Like the juxtaposition of both the dragon's and Beowulf's mounds with references to fire, this description is also found just before the allusion to Heorot's burning in lines 82b–3a.

elevation are reiterated multiple times, emphasising its prominent position in the landscape, a symbol of Hrothgar's power, just as the height of Beowulf's barrow is stressed elsewhere (3097b, 3157b), a necessary feature of any monument intended to be seen from afar. The visibility of the two places is underscored further by their bright appearance: Heorot is described as being *beorht*, 'bright' (997a, 1177a), an adjective also used of Beowulf's barrow (2803a).[141] Finally, like Beowulf's barrow which is built *to gemyndum minum leodum*, 'as a memorial for my [Beowulf's] people' (2805), Heorot is given the epithet *folcstede*, 'folk-dwelling' (76a), a place in which treasure will be given *geongum ond ealdum*, 'to young and old' (72a), serving a similarly communal function for Hrothgar's people. However, where Heorot is the seat of Hrothgar's power from which he *beagas dælde, / sinc æt symle*, 'shared out rings, treasure at the feast' (80b–1a), the poem's narrator gloomily notes that the treasure consigned to Beowulf's barrow will remain there *eldum swa unnyt swa hit æror wæs*, 'as useless to men as it was before' (3168). Although these parallels with Heorot would seem to paint less of a bleak picture than those with the dragon's mound, the final note sounded for Beowulf's barrow is one of uneasy apprehension about the future of the Geats without Beowulf to lead them, much as the poem's opening description of Heorot foreshadows its destruction. Like any modern memorial today, Beowulf's mound is necessarily a physical embodiment of the fleetingness of memory, culture, and place itself.

Conclusion

Chapter 1 demonstrated that, as the *sine qua non* of human social space in Old English poetry, Heorot is the definitive central place in *Beowulf*—at least it is for aristocratic society. However, in its examination of the moors surrounding Heorot, the mere and *niðsele* of Grendel's mother,

[141] Cf. the *beorht hofu*, 'bright buildings' (2313a), of Beowulf's own hall and the surrounding dwellings.

the dragon's barrow, and Beowulf's own burial mound, this chapter has shown the various ways in which these distinct places threaten any abiding sense of stability or longevity which Heorot might otherwise stand for. The moors, fens and fastnesses of the wild space beyond Heorot encircle and constrain the hall; and whilst this fact of geography—however vague this 'geography' may be in practice—defines the limits of Heorot and human society, it also reveals a society beset on all sides by the 'natural' threats, monstrous or otherwise, which lurk there. As the one who presides over this ill-defined spatial container, Grendel epitomises these threats, and in his nightly ravages of the hall, he elides the boundary between inside and out. Moreover, the two descriptions of the watery dwelling of Grendel's mother confront the audience of *Beowulf* with the clearest example of the *locus terribilis* in all of Old English literature. A medieval reader of, or listener to, *Beowulf* should rightly have feared for the poem's protagonist, even if he betrays no fear himself. By inverting the classical *topos* of the *locus amoenus* and by seemingly drawing on the tradition of the *Visio sancti Pauli*, the *Beowulf*-poet conjures up a place truly deserving of Hrothgar's opinion that this is no pleasant place. Besides the significance of the mere for the narrative, the inversion of Heorot found in Grendel's mother's *niðsele* unsettles more than anything else in the poem ideas about the stability and security of the hall.

In a subtly dissimilar way, the various parallels between the descriptions of the dragon's barrow at the end of the poem and of Heorot once more call into question any sense of permanence or comfort that the hall ought, in theory, to offer. Although the dragon is Beowulf's fiercest, and ultimately deadliest, adversary in the poem, its dwelling place is not a *locus terribilis*. Instead, its various associations with other ostensibly Roman places in the Old English poetic corpus suggest that the dragon's barrow is a place 'out of time', a sense impressed on the poem's audience in particular by the 'Lay of the Last Survivor'. Like descriptions of other instances of *eald enta geweorc*, 'the old work of giants', the dragon's

barrow is a testament to the transience of all earthly things. Just as the Last Survivor's people passed, like their treasure, out of memory, and just as the dragon was slain, so too with the passing of time will Beowulf's memory fade, despite the construction of a mound over his funeral pyre. Indeed, this monument, this place, is the enduring landmark of the poem, a site of commemoration following Beowulf's death and a beacon to seafarers. Nonetheless, although the last spoken words of the poem are technically given, albeit only indirectly, to Beowulf's twelve mounted retainers as they eulogise their lord,[142] the figurative final word goes to the solitary Geatish woman with her *giomorgyd*, 'song of mourning' (3150a). Her fears for the future of the Geatish people without their lord, whose own passing is symbolised by his burial mound, render explicit the poem's underlying anxiety about transience. More alarming for the poem's audience, perhaps, is that the Geatish woman's fears leave no space for the understated consolation offered in the refrain of *Deor*: *Þæs ofereode, þisses swa mæg*, which might be paraphrased thus: 'That unhappy event passed, and so, therefore, can this one'. The death of Beowulf necessarily entails only future strife and the end of his people. Finally, in its allusions to Heorot, a place of communal life, the establishment of which takes on almost mythopoeic proportions, the description of the burial mound—with its own 'half-mythic atmosphere'[143]—brings *Beowulf* full circle: this funereal place stands not just for the death of the poem's hero, and ultimately his people, but for the fleetingness of everything on earth.

[142] See Martin Puhvel, 'The Ride around Beowulf's Barrow', *Folklore*, 94 (1983), 108–12.
[143] Edward B. Irving Jr, *Introduction to Beowulf* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 99.

Conclusion
Place, Transience, and the Promise of Eternity

…worhte […]   wuldor alwalda,
rume roderas
'…the ruler of all made the glory [of heaven], spacious skies'
—*Maxims I* 131–2a

A place which has recurrently appeared in this thesis, albeit often only in passing, is Heaven. The most important place in Christian thought is conspicuous in Old English poetry for the absence of clear descriptions of the place as a physical place. As Howe notes, 'Old English poets are far more expressive' in their descriptions of transient earthly places than in their representations of Heaven. He goes on, 'The heavenly home may be all the more mysteriously alluring in [Old English poetry] for never being described in precise terms', even if such a fact 'seems at times poetically inadequate'.[1] Whether such a deficit of descriptions of Heaven is 'poetically inadequate' or not, the closing lines of *Maxims II* provide a perfectly adequate explanation for the apparent lack of imagination on the part of Old English poets:

Næni eft cymeð
hider under hrofas   þe þæt her for soð
mannum secge   hwylc sy meotodes gesceaft,
sigefolca gesetu,   þær he sylfa wunað.

[No-one comes back here again,
hither under the roofs, who can truthfully
say to people what the nature of the ruler might be,
or of the seats of the victory-folk, where he himself dwells.] (*Max II* 63b–6)

[1] Howe, *Writing the Map*, p. 60.

As this thesis has clearly shown, Old English poets did not lack for earthly places in the inventory of their spatial *imaginaire*: the mead-hall, ruined Roman buildings, faraway cities, hermitages, the dwelling-places of exiles, burial places, the expanse of the sea, hostile landscapes, and the subterranean lairs of monstrous beings are all described in vivid detail. But these were all places which had real-world points of reference, even if they did not necessarily describe actual places.[2] Heaven, conversely, had no such point of reference, nor indeed could it. Howe very plausibly suggests that '[p]recise description of the heavenly home would have required a measure of invention on the poet's part that might have opened the way to doctrinal error'—not least when writing in the vernacular, an anxiety which greatly preoccupied Ælfric—whilst also detracting, perhaps, from consideration of the arguably more important project of the journey to Heaven.[3] Just as the apocryphal *Visio sancti Pauli* with its depiction of part of Heaven was condemned for its heterodoxy by both Aldhelm and Ælfric, so too might one expect visions of Heaven to be an inappropriate subject for Old English poetry.[4]

The lack of any clear articulation of what Heaven must be like is unsurprising since in the Bible, as Jeffrey Russell notes, 'Heaven itself is ineffable, beyond words'. Accordingly, Heaven is denoted not in any obviously physical way but rather 'in the language of earthly delight' through appeals to the senses of hearing, sight, taste/smell and touch, that is, via music, light, sweetness and God's embrace, respectively.[5] There is also, in Russell's words, a tension

[2] Even if no-one could have seen a Grendel-like being or a dragon in real life, many animals native to Britain and Northern Europe live in underground burrows or caves.
[3] Howe, *Writing the Map*, p. 61. For Ælfric's concerns about heresy (OE *gedwyld*), see the preface to the first series of his *Catholic Homilies* in *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series*, ed. by Clemoes, pp. 173–7; and Malcolm Godden, 'Ælfric and the Alfredian Precedents', in *A Companion to Ælfric*, ed. by Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, 18 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 144–5, 160–1.
[4] Wieland, pp. 79–80. In 2 Corinthians 12.2–4 Paul says that he could not speak of what he saw when he was brought to Heaven, and thus could not have reported it to anyone for it to have subsequently been described in writing.
[5] Jeffrey Burton Russell, *A History of Heaven: The Singing Silence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 6. Nonetheless, as Benjamin S. Waller, 'Metaphorical Space and Enclosure in Old English Poetry' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oregon, 2013), pp. 172–3, notes, various books of the Bible present Heaven as a city with foundations, walls, a gate, buildings, and God's central seat of power. See e.g. Matthew 7:13–14, John 14:2, 2 Corinthians 5:1, Hebrews 11:10, and especially Revelations 11–21.

‘between the theological need for an abstract heaven and the artistic and everyday need for physical images’, a tension also found in representations of Heaven in Old English.[6] Indeed, the abstract, even ambiguous, quality of Heaven as it is depicted in Old English poetry has been noted by a number of critics.[7] As Ananya Kabir discusses, Heaven is sometimes conflated with Paradise (*neorxnawang*) in Old English writing, whilst at others the two places are distinguished, despite being described in similar terms, as in *Guthlac B* 827b–37.[8] Nonetheless, like other poets, in his description of Heaven the poet of *Guthlac B* ‘avoids altogether visual details, and instead uses for each location, abstract ideas couched in diction traditionally associated with the other [place]’, a phenomenon also detectable in *Christ III*.[9] The closing lines of *Christ III* offer paradigmatic descriptions of both Heaven and Hell, with that of Hell serving as a foil to accentuate the overwhelmingly positive attributes of Heaven. According to lines 725–67, Hell is deep (727a) and dark (765a), filled with flames (728a, 753b–4a) and various torments (737b, 749a, 758a, 760b), and conceived of as some kind of enclosed *hus*, ‘house, dwelling’ (758a, 761b).[10] In contrast, Heaven is an open *eþel*, ‘homeland’ (773a), situated above the earth *on swegle*, ‘in the sky/heavens’ (793a), filled with light (776b, 780b, 785b, 790b–1a), and *blæd*, *þrym* and *wuldor*, ‘glory’ (769b, 788a, 798b), *dream*, ‘joy’ (770b, 775a, 778a), and *blis*, ‘bliss’ (780a, 783b), which will be shared with singing angels (779b, 783a), and, of course, with God himself (770b, 775b–6a, 778b, 781, 784b, 798b). However, whilst this passage conveys something of what eternal life in Heaven will be like for those who ascend on Judgement Day, it says virtually nothing of Heaven as a place, other than that it is a

[6] Russell, p. 3.
[7] Kabir, p. 154; Tristram, p. 102; Waller, pp. 167–9; and Mary E. Ward, ‘Forests of Thought and Fields of Perception: Landscape and Community in Old English Poetry’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Birmingham, 2013), p 244.
[8] Kabir, pp. 153–4. On the meaning of *neorxnawang*, see Alan K. Brown, ‘*Neorxnawang*’, *NM*, 74 (1973), 610–23; Kabir, pp. 142–7; and Jane Roberts, ‘A Preliminary “Heaven” Index for Old English’, *LSE*, n.s. 16 (1985), 208–19 (pp. 214–16). See also description of the interim paradise in *The Phoenix*, discussed in Chapter 4.
[9] Kabir, p. 154.
[10] Cf. esp. *Gen B* 322–37, 356–94; *Sat* 24b–43, 690–729. For recent discussions of descriptions of Hell in Old English poetry, see Bolintineanu, ‘Marvelous Spaces’, pp. 184–200; Garner, *Structuring Spaces*, pp. 83–8; Waller, pp. 198–217; and Ward, pp. 230–43.

'homeland', or rather the only homeland, for the heavenly hosts, as discussed elsewhere, for instance, by Ælfric.[11]

Such abstract references to the joys of heavenly society are much more commonplace in Old English verse than are depictions of any of the concrete features which might characterise Heaven as a physical location. However, just as God made man in his image, so too, it seems, did Old English poets imagine heavenly society to be like the human experience of community in the hall—or what Hugh Magennis calls 'hall society'—especially, of course, in more explicitly religious poems where Heaven comes more clearly into view.[12] Although not all such poems make reference to all of these features, Heaven is variously described as a (bright) city,[13] containing (roofed) buildings,[14] and occasionally even as a hall or similar dwelling,[15] at the centre of which place is God's high throne,[16] surrounded by the seats of his angels,[17] who sing and participate in heavenly joys.[18] Superficially, at least, these glimpses of Heaven reveal it to be a place envisaged as a kind of transcendental 'mead-hall' (without the mead), in which God sits on his high throne (in one instance even called a *giefstol*, 'gift-stool'),[19] surrounded by his angelic 'retainers' (sometimes in fact referred to as *þegnas*), immersed in the joys of heavenly song and what might be construed as a kind of 'feasting'.[20]

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[11] On the idea of Heaven as a homeland, see *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series*, ed. by Clemoes, p. 264 (*CH* I.10, *Dominica in quinquagessima*); and Waller, pp. 193–5. Fitzgerald, *Rebel Angels*, p. 40, points out that in *Genesis A*, Heaven is repeatedly referred to as some form of 'homeland': *eðel*, 'homeland' (35 times), *yrfe*, 'inheritance' (13) *eard*, 'dwelling' (10), and *ham*, 'home' (8). For discussion of the legal status of this homeland in terms of the conflict between God and the rebel angels, see pp. 32–46.

[12] Magennis, *Images of Community*, p. 38; Neville, p. 37, n. 76; Ward, pp. 243–8.

[13] *Chr II* 519a, 530a, 742b; *Gen A* 27–8a; *Guth A* 17b; *Sat* 86b, 213a, 256a, 297a, 308a, 362a, 457b, 612b, 622b, 655a, 686a. See Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, pp. 215–17.

[14] *And* 1686b; *Chr II* 742a; *Guth A* 18a; *Guth B* 1317a; *Sat* 294a, 601b. Heaven is also described figuratively as a roof for humans in *Chr I* 61a; *Exo* 298b; *Gen A* 146a; *Hymn* 6a; *Max II* 64a.

[15] *And* 103b; *Sat* 43b, 93a, 686b. Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, pp. 214–15; Ward, pp. 245–6.

[16] *Chr II* 516b, 555a, 572a; *Gen B* 260b, 667a; *Guth A* 585a; *Guth B* 1319a; *Sat* 47a, 172–3a, 186–7a, 218a, 233a, 297a, 587a, 661a.

[17] *Chr II* 630a, 646a; *Gen A* 8a, 15a, 94–5a; *Gen B* 669; *Max II* 66a. Ward, pp. 246–7.

[18] *Chr III* 768–98; *Dream* 131b–56; *Gen B* 675b–6a; *Guth B* 1314b–16, 1320b–25a; *Sat* 44–8a, 140–4a, 151b–5a, 215b–22, 233–6a, 308b–14, 327–9a, 347–64, 504b–7a, 563b–8a.

[19] However, on the ambiguity of this unique description (*Chr II* 572a), see Heidi Stoner, 'Heaven and Hall: Space and Place in Anglo-Saxon England', in *Place and Space in the Medieval World*, ed. by Meg Boulton, Jane Hawkes, and Heidi Stoner (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), pp. 162–5.

[20] Kabir, pp. 147–50. For a general discussion of the characteristics of Heaven, see Waller, pp. 169–98.

As Howe pithily puts it, ‘without th[e] evocation of the earthly, the heavenly cannot be glimpsed, without the depiction of the seen there can be no apprehension of the unseen.’[21]

Making the unseen seen in a very literal way, the illustrations of the Junius Manuscript (Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Junius 11) which accompany *Genesis A* and *B* depict a number of these features.[22]

Fig. 3: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11, p. ii (cropped)

[21] Howe, *Writing the Map*, p. 63.
[22] Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, p. 217. See also Catherine Karkov, *Text and Picture in Anglo-Saxon England*, CSASE, 31 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), esp. pp. 45–100. For a digital facsimile of MS Junius 11, see ‘Bodleian Library MS. Junius 11’, *Digital Bodleian* (2015) <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/d5e3a9fc-abaa-4649-ae48-be207ce8da15/> [accessed 27 January 2022].

Fig. 4: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11, p. 3 (detail of upper register)

Pillars and arches are frequently used as framing devices around illustrated scenes, especially by the first of the manuscript's two principal illustrators,[23] as seen on the verso of the first folio of the manuscript (p. ii; Fig. 3), which depicts God sitting enthroned under an arch supported by pillars; similarly, p. 2 shows God enthroned, with the caption *hælendes hehseld*, 'the saviour's high-seat'.[24] On the facing page (p. 3; Fig. 4), the upper of four registers—each demarcated by pillars and cross-beams or floors—portrays angels, some perched on what seems to be a dais, thronging around a central figure, Satan, who stands next to an imposing building with archways, windows and tiled roofs.[25] Although such visual representations do not necessarily correspond directly with all of the features identified in poetic descriptions of Heaven, they further suggest, at least, that Heaven was generally conceived of as a city filled with roofed buildings, inhabited by angelic hosts, at the centre of which sat God on his throne. Crucially, though, in all depictions of Heaven, it is represented as God's eternal, immutable

[23] Karkov, p. 33.
[24] On the relationship between depictions of enthronement in the Bible and Anglo-Saxon kingship, and how these relate to space and spatiality, see Stoner, 'Heaven and Hall', pp. 159–77. However, Stoner does not consider the illustrations in the Junius Manuscript.
[25] Karkov, pp. 40, 49–50. The narrative of the four panels relates the fall of the rebel angels. Other illustrations containing depictions of Heaven are found on pp. 9–11, 17.

dwelling place in contrast, by implication, with the transient earthly home of mortal humans.[26] The physical place of Heaven and the community which resides there will endure for all time. Even when Heaven is not named, representations of earthly transience necessarily stand in contrast with the eternal heavenly kingdom and emphasise that this is the only place worth seeking, and worth inhabiting.

That the central finding of this thesis is, essentially, that fleeting earthly places are emblematic of the transience of all worldly things should hardly be surprising for a poetic tradition in which, as Roy Liuzza has put it, 'the contemplation of earthly mutability sometimes seems almost obsessive'.[27] And although Tolkien was commenting on the fusion of the pagan and the Christian in *Beowulf*, he similarly observed that the primary theme of the poem is 'that man, each man and all men, and all their works shall die'.[28] Indeed, of all the built works of men examined in this thesis, not a single one escapes this fate: Heorot burns, the fate of the Roman city in *The Ruin* is evident from the poem's modern title, the wine-halls of *The Wanderer* crumble, and the Last Survivor's burial mound becomes the home of an avaricious dragon. Even those places which do not perish or decline are fundamentally changed in one way or another: Guthlac's *beorg* is turned from a demonic into a holy place, Mermedonia is converted from a heathen city of cannibals into a nascent Christian community, and the *niðsele* of Grendel's mother is cleansed of its sole surviving resident and rendered uninhabited space. Finally, as evidenced most forcefully by the elegies of the Exeter Book, the individual's experience of place can be radically altered from one day to the next. The Seafarer rejects *þis deade lif læne on londe* in favour of the cold embrace of the sea; the exiled Wife, estranged

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[26] Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, p. 218.
[27] *Old English Poetry: An Anthology*, ed. and trans. by Roy M. Liuzza (Peterborough, ON: Broadview 2014), p. 24.
[28] Tolkien, 'The Monsters and The Critics', p. 23. Indeed, Tolkien would go on to say of *The Lord of the Rings* in a letter drafted in 1956, 'The real theme for me is about something much more permanent and difficult [than War is]: Death and Immortality.' See J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, ed. by Humphrey Carpenter, with Christopher Tolkien (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981; repr. London: HarperCollins, 2006), p. 246.

from her lord, is confined to a cave far removed from human society; and Beowulf goes from facing a dragon's fire in its barrow to being cremated and then consigned to his own burial mound.

However, the changing fate of a place or of one's place in the world is not necessarily a negative thing, as Guthlac's and Andrew's transformations of place attest to. Although Heorot is razed, the Danes repel the Heathobards and win the day; the ruined Roman city evokes a sense not only of the inevitable passage of time, but also of wonder; despite his loss of place on earth, the Wanderer ultimately looks ahead to the consolation of eternal life; the Seafarer chooses his pseudo-exile at sea as a means of bringing himself closer to the heavenly community; and although Beowulf's final adversary mortally wounds him, Beowulf kills the dragon, depriving it of its hoard and its barrow. The only figure examined in this thesis for whom a change in place offers no consolation at all is the solitary exile of *The Wife's Lament*. Nonetheless, the examples analysed here demonstrate that place is seldom conceived as a homogeneous phenomenon. Indeed, previous studies into different manifestations of place and space in Old English literature have uncovered a variety of characteristics of these concepts in Anglo-Saxon thought. Critics have sought to understand Anglo-Saxon notions of place and space chiefly as a means of imposing spatial order on the world. For scholars such as Howe and Michelet, relating narratives of conquest and migration and mentally mapping space in proto-geographical and historical accounts are some of the strategies by which learned Anglo-Saxons imposed such a spatial order. In addition, Fitzgerald has established that the struggle for dominion in the narrative of the fall of the rebel angels is fundamentally a spatial one. Bolintineanu has argued that otherworldly places and spaces of wonder and dread, 'marvelous spaces', resisted being mapped or having any kind of order imposed on them. Discenza has stressed the importance of inhabiting places as a way of understanding them and of establishing the limits of human control on both the macrocosmic and the microcosmic level. And finally,

Wolf has emphasised the importance of the inhabited space of the hall in particular as a place where a distinctive form of collective identity is created and perpetuated, reinforcing the interdependence of place and human social space. Although the analysis presented here focuses on Old English poetry, a valuable future avenue of research would be to study conceptions of place in Old English prose writing—already touched on where especially pertinent to my argument—and in the considerable body of Latin prose and poetry which survives from Anglo-Saxon England. Nevertheless, since the conceptions of place in Old English poetry examined in this thesis are engendered by a Christian understanding of our time of earth, it seems likely that the significance of place as presented in these other forms of writing would be fundamentally the same as the conceptions of place uncovered in the course of the present study.

In this analysis, a number of distinct and overlapping conceptions of place have been unearthed. This thesis has confirmed previous assessments that in Old English poetry the principal location of human social space, and specifically of aristocratic society, is the royal hall, especially as epitomised by Heorot. As the seat of Danish and, later in the poem, Geatish royal power, the hall is defined as much by the social interactions between a lord or a king and his retainers as by its physical features. However, just as a king is mortal, so too must his hall eventually meet its end: both Heorot and Beowulf's hall are burnt to the ground, albeit under different circumstances. Similarly, the fleeting nature of all civilisations and their settlements is brought home to the beholder of the remnants of a Roman city in *The Ruin*. The depiction of this place, couched in the language of the hall, evokes nostalgia, wonder, and a profound sense of loss. But where transience is an inescapable attribute of human society, the fleeting experience of place is also common to individuals exiled from human company. Whether through the loss of one's lord, the voluntary separation from society in pursuit of salvation, or the imposed displacement from one's home, place is rarely permanent, especially in the more

overtly elegiac poems of the Old English poetic tradition. Even if these poems only allude to the social aspects of place, they highlight the rather more personal view of the experience of place and how it changes.

Yet, as this thesis has also shown, the mutable nature of place is not necessarily always a negative thing. Especially in the case of the surviving verse saints' lives, place can be reclaimed from demonic or heathen adversaries and transformed into overtly Christian space. However, this is not change simply for the sake of exorcism or conversion, but also for the salvific potential that such a transformation affords to the would-be saint who undertakes it. In the saints' lives examined above, models from the classical and Germanic inheritances of Old English literature are exploited in depictions of place both to symbolise the achievement of salvation and to mark key moments in the narrative, demonstrating the multiple significations that place can have in any given text. Just as place can be transformed for the better, so too can it be inverted with rather more unsettling effects. In the case of the dwelling of Grendel's mother, language denoting the physical structure of Heorot, its surroundings, and the society that resides there is repurposed to evoke a sense of strange familiarity. Similarly, the classical trope of the *locus amoenus* is inverted to present Grendel's mother's mere as a *locus terribilis*, reflecting and heightening the sense of dread instilled by the mere's principal inhabitant. However, though the dwelling of Beowulf's killer might be expected to be more terrifying still, the dragon's barrow is instead a witness to a bygone society, foreshadowing the downfall of the Geats, a grim fate which Beowulf seems to reflect on as he studies the architectural features of the place in his last moments. However, Beowulf's own burial mound is little different from the barrow in which he receives his death wound, embodying the end of his line and of his people. Beowulf's final resting place, then, is itself a monument to the transience of people and of place itself.

If wealth, friends, kinsmen, and all people are *læne*, ‘fleeting’ or ‘lent’, as *The Wanderer* relates, then it comes as no surprise to find that place, too, is transient in Old English poetry. However, the fleeting places on earth—indeed, the fleeting place of earth itself—stand in contrast with the *ece*, ‘eternal’, place of Heaven. The transitory nature of human life is understandably a universal preoccupation, to which different cultures have typically responded by imagining some form of afterlife. It is specifically the promise of eternal life in Heaven which looms large in the surviving corpus of Old English verse. But this cosmic conception of place is not the only one which obtains in the poems analysed in this thesis: place is mutable over the course of centuries and on the very much more human timescale of decades, years, and even days. And not only is place itself a fleeting phenomenon, but it is symbolic of transience and transformation. Place in Old English poetry can also evoke wonder, awe, dread, and nostalgia, such that it is no mere background feature, but often an integral part of the very fabric of the poetry itself. Finally, by paying attention to place in Old English poetry, we can glimpse, if only out of the corner of our eye, how those who produced and engaged with these poems imagined their place in the world.

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