Via Rome: Medieval Medievalisms in the Old English *Ruin*

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The recent publication of *The Cambridge Companion to Medievalism* under the editorship of Louise D'Arcens marks a crowning moment in the history of a discipline whose institutional backing has not always been so strong.[1] For some time now, medievalism studies have been enjoying increasing respect for the insights that they can offer into matters ranging from periodization, colonization, and nationalism, to the potentially mutual imbrication of good scholarship and good fun.[2] Since the majority of the contributors to the new *Cambridge Companion* work both in what we might call traditional medieval studies as well as in medievalism studies, the volume also serves as evidence for the rapprochement between these two fields. A significant facilitating factor in this regard has been a willingness shared across the disciplines to conceive of time not solely in linear terms. Researchers in both camps have met over the recognition that the present, in Carolyn Dinshaw's words, "is not a singular, fleeting moment but comprises relations to other times, other people, other worlds."[3] Viewed from this perspective, the procedures of both medieval and medievalist texts can be seen to correspond, and the distinction between what is medieval and what comes afterwards is blurred.

These intertwining ideas have a rich history of their own. Even in their earliest iterations, medievalism studies highlighted the extent to which paying attention to the Middle Ages retrospectively is always a creative act, not only for participants in popular culture but also for academics.[4] For their part, medieval historians such as Jacques Le Goff have elucidated the plurality of the medieval understanding of time.[5] Throughout his career, Le Goff also argued for a reconceptualization of the Middle Ages that stretched the period chronologically into the eighteenth century and beyond.[6] Building on these traditions, this essay extends the field of enquiry to include consideration of the ways in which understandings of the Middle Ages are produced not only with hindsight but also concurrently within the period

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itself. The argument focuses on one Old English poem, *The Ruin*, offering a new reading of this familiar text that explores its deliberate disposition of time alongside its specific cultural attachments to the past. In so proceeding, I aim to show how *The Ruin* exemplifies the Anglo-Saxons' interest both in preparing their reputation for posterity and in thinking about the possible futures of their history.

My broader theme, "medieval medievalisms," is ripe for examination. The fitness of the term for discussions of later medieval culture has already been demonstrated by John Hines, who discusses archeological and textual evidence showing a desire "to make both material and manifest a memorial version of the period's social and spiritual values."[7] More recently, in a study treating texts ranging chronologically from *Beowulf* to *Othello*, Andrew James Johnston has shown how the Middle Ages "actively contributes to the production of [the] nostalgic myths on which are founded so many of the notions that constitute the 'typically medieval.'"[8] The potential productivity of the notion of "medieval medievalisms" is also suggested in individual contributions to *The Cambridge Companion to Medievalism*. Thus Chris Jones calls attention to the representation of the Anglo-Saxons' legendary Germanic past in *Beowulf*, which, he argues, "'medievalises' the culture of a continental heroic age out of which it imagined itself as having evolved."[9]

Like *Beowulf*, and like so much Anglo-Saxon poetry, *The Ruin* is infused with a desire for the past that exceeds the representational possibilities of linear time. Like a mirage, the dilapidated structure described by the poem's speaker shimmers between its past and present states. What distinguishes *The Ruin* is its direct implication in Roman history. The building whose dilapidation is described is identifiable as a Roman bathing complex; its particular characteristics have been found to match the Roman baths at the English town of Bath.[10] In this essay, I contend that the overlaying of projections from the Roman and legendary Germanic past in *The Ruin* enabled the poem's Anglo-Saxon audiences to develop a sophisticated conception of their destiny as the inheritors of Rome.

The argument starts by following the order of the poem in a line-by-line reading. I begin by showing how the manipulation of the Old English tense system in the text's opening section establishes a mobile timeframe for the whole work. While there is a tradition of imputing a nostalgic impulse to *The Ruin*, I suggest that the poem's situation of its audience at an indeterminate point of intersection between the past, the present, and the future of its speaker engages consideration not only of the good that went before but also

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of the good that might be yet to come. This dual perspective—backward-looking on the one hand, forward-looking on the other—is characteristic of Anglo-Saxon writing on the history of Rome, particularly that produced in the vicinity of the kingdom of Wessex during and just after the reign of King Alfred (871–99). I argue that the treatment of the Roman inheritance in *The Ruin* parallels that found in the Alfredian works and that the poem can fruitfully be read alongside them as the product of a broader Alfredian milieu.

My overarching aims are to demonstrate the deliberate, historically situated work that goes into the construction of the legendary Germanic past in *The Ruin* and to think about how this legendary past intersects with other imagined pasts, in this case, that of Rome. As Roberta Frank pointed out some time ago, the Anglo-Saxons "tried harder and harder with each passing century to establish a Germanic identity," but modern ideas about the Anglo-Saxons' legendary Germanic past have more often been "ours, not theirs."[11] Since this holds true as much for popular as for academic understandings of early medieval English culture, it is especially important always to be ready again to listen to Anglo-Saxon voices when we can catch them attempting to negotiate history.

The organization of time

The opening lines of *The Ruin* are all about time:

> Wrætlic is þes wealstan— wyrde gebræcon,
> burgstede burston; brosnað enta geweorc. (1–2)
>
> [Wondrous is this masonry—fate shattered / the city, broke it to pieces; the work of giants crumbles.][1]

The speaker describes a derelict urban vista from three clearly defined temporal positions. We are told of the wondrous effect that the scene has on the speaker while the speaker is speaking; we are told of the past actions of fate, which shattered the city and broke it into pieces; and we are told something of the moral import of the ruined structure: "brosnað enta geweorc" [the work of giants crumbles] is a gnomic statement that draws us into the eternal present of that which is always true—terrestrial wealth is unstable and fleeting.[13] The poem's opening gambit places *The Ruin* in the orbit of the Old English elegies, a group of poems whose unifying feature has traditionally been thought to be their expression of "the transitory nature of the pleasures

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and security of this world."[14] As the speaker becomes increasingly absorbed by the scene described, however, grayer temporal zones are opened up, and the moral meaning of the poem detaches from this initial snapshot.

In the lines directly following the opening just cited, the speaker of *The Ruin* develops the description of the dilapidated structure, adding an account of the demise of those who made it:

> Hrofas sind gehrorene,   hreorge torras,
> hrungeat berofen   hrim on lime,
> scearde scurbeorge   scorene, gedrorene,
> ældo undereotone.   Eorðgrap hafað
> waldendwyrhtan   forweorone, geleorene,
> heardgripe hrusan,   oþ hund cnea
> werþeoda gewitan. (3–9)

> [Roofs are fallen in, towers ruinous, / the barred gate destroyed, rime on mortar, / gaping buildings rent, collapsed, / undermined by age. The grip of the earth has / the king's builders, perished, departed, / the hard grip of the earth, until a hundred generations / of peoples depart.]

There seems to be a deliberate attempt here to shade in the gaps left between the distinct temporal positions defined in the poem's opening sentence. The possibilities afforded by the Old English tense system are deployed to particularly subtle effect. Where at the opening of the poem the speaker moves deliberately between the simple present and the simple past, this passage abounds with the compound tenses available in Old English to describe past actions in terms of their present effects. The first sentence tips between past and present time, pivoting on the verb *sind*. This form would usually be translated as "are," as it is in my translation, but unlike Modern English *are*, Old English *sind* could be used to form both present passive and present perfect active tense forms.[15] My translation of "hrofas sind gehrorene" as "roofs are fallen in" attempts to capture the indeterminacy of *sind* but it relies on an anachronism: in earlier Modern English, forms of the verb *to be* could still be used to conjugate the present perfect where now we use *to have*.[16] Where Modern English is stretched thin in my translation, Old English shows its flexibility.

In lines 3–6 of *The Ruin*, *sind* has a lot of grammatical work to do. It is the sole finite verb connecting a series of quickly drawn impressions: collapsed roofs, ruinous towers, a broken gate, mortar covered in rime, decay-

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ing structures open to the elements and undermined by age. It is heard only once; the audience of the poem must supply it mentally in other instances in order for the speaker's vision to take shape.[17] In five cases, *sind* functions as an auxiliary verb, building forms of the present perfect active ("sind gehrorene," "[sind] gedrorene" [have fallen in, have collapsed]) and of the present passive ("[sind] berofen," "[sind] scorene," "[sind] undereotone" [is destroyed, are rent, are undermined]); in two other cases, it functions by implication in the present simple ("hreorge [sind] torras," "hrim [sind] on lime" [towers are ruinous, rime is on mortar]).[18] The supple extension of temporal perspectives offered by the speaker in these lines continues into the poem's next sentence, whose main clause describes the fate of the king's builders in the present but whose syntactic structure replicates that of the present perfect in its combination of "hafað" [has] with two past participles, used here as postmodifiers: "forweorone," "geleorene" [perished, departed].

At this point in *The Ruin*, the poem's speaker is already exercising the Old English tense system to a degree that is unusual.[19] In the final "oþ" [until] clause, linear time breaks down entirely. One might expect to meet a form of the present indicative at the end of the last line of the passage, which would be *gewitað*. This is the form rendered in my translation, "until a hundred generations / of peoples depart." The present subjunctive (*gewiten*) or the past indicative (*gewiton*), might also have been possible, both forms communicating a sense of the future viewed from the past (i.e., "will have departed"). Instead we are faced with the timeless, untranslatable infinitive, "gewitan" [literally, to depart]. At this point in the poem, it is unclear where the speaker stands in history vis-à-vis the ruin. Have one hundred generations since the departure of the king's builders already passed? Are they in process? Or are they still to come?[20]

The difficulties inherent in any attempt to interpret the Old English tense system at a one-thousand-year remove no doubt contribute to the impression of temporal confusion in these lines. As Bernard Muir points out, appreciation of Old English poetry must take into account the perennial problems of scribal miscopying and of the leveling of unstressed endings in late Old English.[21] Nevertheless, it seems sensible to view the mobile timeframe of *The Ruin* as a consciously developed textual feature given the otherwise intricately wrought structure of the poem, which is rich in double alliteration, interlinear alliteration, rhyme, and other artificial effects.[22] The immediate mimetic aim of lines 3–9 of the text appears to be to reproduce the experience of being drawn into thinking about the ruin, of letting one's gaze drift over its uneven surfaces, and of considering in various

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combinations its past, present, and future forms—it would surely be hard to think of a more determined attempt to represent the "heterogeneity of the present" adduced by Dinshaw.[23] As an introduction to the work, the impact of lines 1–9 is in equal measure arresting and disorienting. This opening does more than simply encourage identification with the text's speaker; it repositions the audience at the speaker's shifting temporal viewpoint.

The Roman past and the Anglo-Saxon future

In a thoroughgoing reevaluation of the role of the past in Old English poetry, Kathleen Davis has pointed out the limitations inherent in approaches that concentrate uniquely on the nostalgic, backward-looking tendencies in the verse. Instead, Davis suggests, a focus on the "finely calibrated sense of multiple temporalities" elaborated in Old English poems can clarify their openness to a world beyond regret in which the lessons of the past might be incorporated into the production of a better future.[24] In *The Ruin*, the mobile timeframe established at the outset of the poem so orients the work that the audience can access a perspective on the future as well as on the past of its speaker. Thus in the subsequent description of the technical achievements of the ruined building's makers, at the same time as the speaker wonders at the work of dead men, there is an excitement attached to the observation of their skill. It is as if these objects, as well as being Roman remains, might also be relics from an Anglo-Saxon future in which such craftsmanship is equaled. The walling of the ruin is singled out for special praise:

> Oft þæs wag gebad
> ræghar ond readfah   rice æfter oþrum,
> ofstonden under stormum;   steap geap gedreas.
> Worað giet se[. . . . .]num geheawen
> felon [. . . . .]
> grimme gegrunden [. . . . .
> . . . . . .] scan   heo [. . . . . . .
> . . . .]g orþonc   ærsceaft [. . . .
> . . . .]g[.]   lamrindum beag
> mod mo[nade   m]yne swiftne gebrægd
> hwætred in hringas,   hygerof gebond
> weallwalan wirum   wundrum togædre. (9–20)

[Again and again this wall survived, / lichen gray and red-stained, one kingdom after another, / remained standing under storms;

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steep, curved, it decayed. / Molders still the . . . gashed / persisted . . . / harshly ground . . . / . . . shone the . . . / . . . skill ancient building . . . / . . . ring with a clay coating / the mind instigated a purpose, wove together, / one determined and resolute bound in rings / the wall braces with wires together wonderfully.]

Burn damage to the late tenth-century manuscript preserving *The Ruin*, the Exeter Book, has rendered these lines difficult to read.[25] It is apparent, however, that the speaker moves from a consideration of the damage done to the ruin by the elements and by the passing of time to an appreciation of the persistence of the structure and of the skill with which it was originally made. Particular attention is afforded to an iron wall brace that has strengthened the building and to the human mind under whose instigation the work was done.[26] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen writes eloquently of how, across the Germanic literatures, the evocation of "the work of giants" serves to recall "a joyful proximity never to be regained" between the more-than-human builders thus evoked and humankind.[27] But the motif is susceptible to alternative deployment and interpretation. In *The Ruin*, the speaker seems to entertain the aspiration that the breach between giants and men—and between the past and the future—might be mended by the Anglo-Saxons' renovation and recreation of their predecessors' wonderful work.

The budding enthusiasm captured in these lines blossoms in the poem's next, richly alliterative section, in which the speaker imagines the glory days of the ruin and its marvelous inhabitants:

Beorht wæron burgræced, burnsele monige,
heah horngestreon, heresweg micel,
meodoheall monig mondreama full. (21–23)

[Bright were the city-dwellings, many halls with running water, / high gables, martial sound, / many a meadhall full of the joys of men.]

Then the poem turns on a line—"oþþæt þæt onwende wyrd seo swiþe" [until fate the mighty changed that] (24)—and this image fades out of view. The speaker considers the destruction of the place by pestilence, and the decrepit state of the once noble structure again comes into the foreground:

Crungon walo wide cwoman woldagas,
swylt eall fornom secgrofra wera;

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wurdon hyra wigsteal westen staþolas,
brosnade burgsteall. Betend crungon
hergas to hrusan. Forþon þas hofu dreorgiað,
ond þæs teaforgeapa tigelum sceadeð
hrostbeages rof. Hryre wong gecrong
gebrocen to beorgum. (25–32)

[The slain fell broadly, days of pestilence came, / death took off all the famous warriors; / their fortresses became waste places, / the city crumbled. Rebuilders fell, / a multitude of them, to the ground. So these courts collapse / and this curved red roof sheds its tiles, / this vaulted roof. To ruin the place fell / shattered in heaps.]

But the idea of the ruin's original state proves irrepressible. The speaker goes on to recall a contrasting scene:

þær iu beorn monig
glædmod ond goldbeorht gleoma gefrætwed,
wlonc ond wingal wighyrstum scan;
seah on sinc, on sylfor, on searogimmas,
on ead, on æht, on eorcanstan,
on þas beorhtan burg bradan rices. (32–37)

[. . . where once many a man, / cheerful and shining in gold, adorned with splendor, / proud and flushed with wine, gleamed in war-trappings, / gazed on treasure, on silver, on strange gems, / on riches, on property, on the precious stone, / on this bright city of a broad kingdom.]

The combination of these contrasting visions gives the text a holographic quality. The poem tips this way and that, revealing now one aspect of the ruin, now another, but always keeping both perspectives in view by virtue of its perpetual motion. Some readers have inferred a causal relationship between the downfall of the city in "woldagas" [days of pestilence] and the scenes of revelry described in lines 21–23 and 32–37. This is the interpretation of the text developed by James F. Doubleday, who reads *The Ruin* alongside a selection of patristic and historiographic texts in which the connection between high living and urban destruction is more clearly marked.[28] Others have highlighted the lack of an obvious attempt on the part of the speaker

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of the poem to extract any particular moral meaning from the description of the decaying structure. This is an aspect of *The Ruin* that distinguishes it from the parallel texts treated by Doubleday and from other analogous works, such as *The Wanderer*, Alcuin's *De clade lindisfarnensis monasterii*, and Venantius Fortunatus's *De excidio Thoringiae*.[29] In Alcuin's poem and in *The Wanderer*, the contemplation of a destroyed structure leads outward to reflections on the inevitable transience of worldly happiness; in Venantius's letter, a description of the ruination of Thuringia functions as a prelude to a more elaborate exposition of the pain caused to its ventriloquized author by her separation from her lover and her family.[30]

By contrast, no definite use is found for the ruination observed in *The Ruin*. Indeed, as Anne Thompson Lee has pointed out, the poem might be thought to have more in common with the classical genre of the poem praising a city, the *encomium urbis*, than with any of the more traditionally cited analogues.[31] Lee's point draws strength from the closing of *The Ruin*, in which the speaker's final words are given over to an expression of renewed admiration for the architectural mastery of the building's makers. The place was once provided with waters:

> Stanhofu stodan, stream hate wearp
> widan wylme; weal eall befeng
> beorhtan bosme, þær þa baþu wæron,
> hat on hreþre. Þæt wæs hyðelic [þing].
> Leton þonne geotan [. . . . .]
> ofer harne stan hate streamas
> un[. . . . .]
> [o]þ þæt hirngmere hate [. . . . . . .
> . . . .] þær þa baþu wæron.
> Þonne is [. . . . .
> . . . . . .]re. Þæt is cynelic þing—
> hu s[e. . . . .] burg [. .]. (38–49)
>
> [Stone courts stood, a stream spouted hotly / in a broad surge; a wall contained everything / in its bright bosom: there the baths were, / hot at their heart. That was a convenient thing. / They then let pour . . . / over gray stone, hot streams / . . . / until that round pool, hot . . . / . . . There the baths were. / Then is . . . / . . . That is a royal thing— / how the . . . city . . .]

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Damage to the manuscript again vexes interpretation here, but the final tone appears to be one of approval. A legible portion of the text's penultimate line reads, "Þæt is cynelic þing" [That is a royal thing] (48). Though the identity of the *þing* referred to is no longer clear, the sense of admiration is palpable.[32]

The positive tones with which *The Ruin* concludes have been heard by most recent readers, including those whose focus has fallen on the nostalgic and backwards-looking quality of Anglo-Saxon poetry.[33] The poem's wonder-filled ending reflects back on the descriptions of the ruin's erstwhile inhabitants, who, like the well-made structure itself, are presented as at once gone and yet still there, as a cause for regret and for celebration. This realization is all the more important because the vision of the ruin's glory days implicates the poem's Anglo-Saxon audience directly. Despite the structure's Roman connections, the speaker of *The Ruin* imagines its former occupants filling the place with the martial noise, the meadhalls, the drinking, and the riches of a legendary Germanic tribe: there is not a toga in sight. As if to spotlight the incongruity of the situation, the runic symbol ᛗ (*mann*) is introduced in the manuscript copy of the poem to form the compound transliterated by modern editors as *mondreama* in the phrase "mondreama full" [full of the joys of men] (23). The deployment of the rune at this juncture recalls the past of the Anglo-Saxons before their arrival in England, where they were converted, and where they adopted the Roman alphabet. It also encourages the forging of a mental connection between the Anglo-Saxons' Continental ancestors and the martial celebration among men described in the poem.

Runes continued to be deployed in Old English writing throughout the Anglo-Saxon period.[34] Nevertheless, the potential thematic import of the scribe's choice of script here makes that choice seem a deliberate anachronism. This impression is compounded by the literary connections of the passage as a whole. The language used to describe the former inhabitants of the ruin and the situations in which they appear are familiar stereotypes in Old English poetry. In *The Seafarer*, the formulaic expression "wlonc ond wingal" [proud and flushed with wine] (29) is also used to evoke a feasting scene, and the meadhall celebrations in *The Ruin* are loosely paralleled at numerous moments in *Beowulf*, such as when Beowulf's arrival is celebrated at Heorot (491–98) or when the damaged hall is decked out for the feasting that follows the fatal injury of Grendel (1011–19).[35] In combination, the runic symbol and the literary connections of the hall joys described in *The Ruin* make it unlikely that medieval audiences of the poem perceived in its description of the revelers a straightforward mirroring of their own contemporary customs and attitudes any more than did the medieval audiences of

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The Seafarer and *Beowulf.* Indeed, in *The Ruin*, it is as if the same historical heroes described in the epic poem have been recalled for a repeat performance of their festivities not in old Scandinavia but in Roman Britain.

In a frequently cited article treating the sense of the past in early medieval England, Michael Hunter traces the Anglo-Saxons' debts to the Germanic and the Roman traditions, which he sees as being so thoroughly intermingled as to obviate the possibility of distinguishing one from the other. Anglo-Saxon England was aware of its inheritances from Rome and from Germania, Hunter argues, "but it was not fully conscious of the difference between them." The Anglo-Saxons respected and copied both these models, he concludes, "without conceiving them as separate."[36] By contrast, I suggest that the early audiences of *The Ruin* were well aware of the overlaying of their Roman inheritance with their projected Germanic past in the poem, and that they were capable of perceiving this superposition as a challenge to complex historical thought. The intrusion of the Germanic revelers at the poem's midpoint transforms *The Ruin* into a laboratory for the Anglo-Saxons' examination of their own legendary history.[37] The perspective offered in the poem is split between contemplation of what has been lost and what might be won again. On the one hand, the speaker alludes to the fading of the Roman *imperium* and of the Anglo-Saxons' pagan attachments. Here the expectations raised by the poem's opening lines are fulfilled: the speaker has addressed the transitory nature of worldly success. This aspect of the poem is real and frightening. In her reading of the poem, Irina Dumitrescu points out the semantic breadth of the text's opening word, *wrætlic*, which, as well as connoting wonder, as per my translation, also connotes horror. Most importantly, however, as Dumitrescu goes on to explain, *wrætlic* "represents a mixture of horror and admiration that provokes reflection."[38] In *The Ruin*, the shifting temporal viewpoint afforded to the poem's audience allows for consideration of the Anglo-Saxons' prospects, which can be viewed both from the perspective of the first Germanic tribes who settled in England in the middle of the fifth century and from the perspective of the speaker of the poem, who lays out its consecutive visions in a later Anglo-Saxon present. In this regard, *The Ruin* offers a striking reflection on the process of *translatio imperii* whereby it was thought throughout the Middle Ages that power moved westward as successive empires waxed and waned.[39] The varying significances of Rome thus coincide with the poem's particular organization of time. The city could be viewed not only in retrospect, as a reminder of the decay of empires, but also in advance, in a spirit of aspiration, as a harbinger of cultural evolution and future prosperity.

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Rome and *The Ruin* in an Alfredian milieu

The complex of attitudes to Rome manifested in *The Ruin* did not evolve in isolation; to allude to the city in Anglo-Saxon England was to engage a rich tradition of thinking about Rome's implications for the Anglo-Saxons' cultural identity. Throughout the early Middle Ages, English art, architecture, literature, and liturgical practice developed under the influence of Rome, connections with the Continent being fostered by frequent traffic for the purposes of diplomacy, trade, and pilgrimage.[40] As Nicholas Howe has shown, moreover, Rome loomed large in Anglo-Saxon England as an idea, as a point of orientation for the English, who inherited their geographical consciousness from the Latin authors.[41] Rome also offered a pattern for thinking about history. M. R. Godden has demonstrated the major contribution made to thinking along these lines early in the Anglo-Saxon period by Bede.[42] In the *Historia ecclesiastica* (731), Bede became the first English historian to make a link between the sacking of Rome by the Goths in 410 and the end of Roman Rule in Britain:

> Fracta est autem Roma a Gothis anno millesimo clxiiii suæ conditionis, ex quo tempore Romani in Brittania regnare cesserunt, post annos ferme quadringentos lxx ex quo Gaius Iulius Caesar eandem insulam adiit. Habitabant autem intra uallum, quod Seuerum trans insulam fecisse commemorauimus, ad plagam meridianam, quod ciuitates farus pontes et stratae ibidem factae usque hodie testantur; ceterum ulteriores Brittaniae partes, uel eas etiam quae ultra Brittaniam sunt insulas, iure dominandi possidebant.
>
> [Now Rome was taken by the Goths in the eleven hundred and sixty-fourth year after its foundation; after this the Romans ceased to rule in Britain, almost 470 years after Gaius Julius Caesar had come to the island. They had occupied the whole land south of the rampart already mentioned, set up across the island by Severus, an occupation to which the cities, light-houses, bridges, and roads which they built there testify to this day. Moreover they possessed the suzerainty over the further parts of Britain as well as over the islands which are beyond it.][43]

Previous accounts of the sack of Rome had stressed the continuity of the empire despite the Gothic incursion. In his *Historiae adversum paganos* (417),

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Paulus Orosius presents the advent of the Goths as a setback that was quickly overcome and that left few traces on the public consciousness. Although the memory of the event is fresh as he writes, Orosius states, "tamen si quis ipsius populi Romani et multitudinem uideat et uocem audiat, 'nihil factum,' sicut etiam ipsi fatentur, arbitrabitur" [if anyone were to see the great numbers of Rome's population and listen to them, he would think, as they themselves say, that "nothing had happened"].[44] Orosius's view reflects his take on the brief that he had received from Augustine, which was to write a history disproving claims that Rome's downfall was due to the adoption of Christianity.[45] It also reflected the self-confident perspective of a historian who was necessarily unaware of the final collapse of the western empire. Writing after that collapse, Bede could reconceive the sack of Rome as a moment of rupture.

Bede's innovation is paralleled in *The Ruin*, whose speaker aspires to inherit a tradition the originators of which have long since decayed and departed. It directly influenced subsequent treatments of Roman history by Anglo-Saxon writers. In particular, a group of annalists and translators associated with the court of King Alfred enhanced Bede's account of the sack of Rome or developed it in new directions.[46] In the Old English version of the *Historia ecclesiastica*, the departure of the Roman troops, implied in Bede's original, is absent, making the sack of Rome the only available cause for the end of Roman rule in Britain; in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the story is fleshed out by the addition of a detail in the annal for 418 about the Romans' burial of treasure before their departure for Gaul; in the Old English *Orosius*, the story told in the Latin original is cut short so that it ends with the sack of Rome, after which the Goths are said to enter into an alliance with the Romans before settling permanently in Italy; and in the Old English *Boethius*, the Goths are shown settling in Italy after conducting a successful military campaign.[47] As Godden concludes, the subtle and not so subtle alterations to source materials that these texts effect bear witness to an "ambivalent view of the Goths and the Romans in the Alfredian world."[48]

The Anglo-Saxons were well used to deploying Roman precedent as a means of shoring up the authority of their rulers or of understanding moments of crisis in their own times.[49] For the readers of the Alfredian prose texts, a range of approaches to the intertwined histories of the Romans and the Goths were available. The experience of the Goths might be understood to parallel that of the Anglo-Saxons; the *adventus Saxonum* could be compared with the Goths' settlement of Italy, either by negotiation or force. The sack of Rome could be viewed either as the event that left England open for the Anglo-Saxons' ancestors to settle, or as a minor upset in a much longer

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imperial history: the late Latin text of Orosius's *Historiae*, which enjoyed a healthy circulation in Anglo-Saxon England, offered a vision of the continuous dominance of Christian Rome.[50] This was a vision in which the Anglo-Saxons might have taken comfort during Alfred's reign, when they were facing pagan incursions of their own from Viking quarters.[51] As Mary Kate Hurley points out, a split perspective on the Roman example is especially evident in the Old English *Orosius*, in which the work's translator systematically uses the tag "cwæð Orosius" [Orosius said] in order to make clear that the text's confident statements about Rome's endurance are the Latin author's, not his.[52] Indeed, the organization of time in this text, which is situated at a liminal position between the past of its late antique source, the present of its translator, and the future of its readers, makes it an engaging companion piece to *The Ruin*.

The decision to depict a Roman ruin in *The Ruin* is significant. The early medieval English landscape was strewn with monuments that might have been chosen for representation. Many of these belonged to the British past, such as the stone circles at Stonehenge and Avebury and the chalk image of the White Horse of Uffington.[53] Later in the period, the Anglo-Saxons' own stone constructions, fallen into disuse, might likewise have provided a setting for the scene described in *The Ruin*.[54] The choice to represent a Roman ruin in the poem bespeaks the Anglo-Saxon fascination with the city, a fascination that was felt particularly strongly in the cultural milieu with which the work can most confidently be associated. While the origins of *The Ruin* are shrouded in mystery, study of the stylistic affiliations and dialect of its one surviving copy in the Exeter Book (ca. 965–75) suggests that at the latest by the first half of the tenth century it was available in a West-Saxon context.[55] It thus seems likely that the poem circulated in the same milieu as the Alfredian prose works just discussed and that one factor motivating its copying there was its engagement with later Roman history.[56] What the poem demonstrates, then, is the complementarity of poetry and historiography in a broadly defined Alfredian and immediately post-Alfredian milieu that was thoroughly concerned with the example of Rome's success and failure and with what these might mean for the Anglo-Saxons, who saw themselves as the city's inheritors. Both historiographic and poetic texts could organize time in a nonlinear fashion in order to explore the problems and the opportunities inherent in the Roman example. It was in the midst of one such exploration that the Anglo-Saxons were invited to recall their legendary Germanic past in *The Ruin*.

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The legendary Germanic past

It is often remarked that the burn damage to the Exeter Book that destroyed a significant portion of the text of *The Ruin* installs the modern reader of the work in a position relative to the poem that mirrors that of the poem's speaker vis-à-vis the crumbling Roman baths.[57] Like the speaker of *The Ruin*, modern readers are faced with the partial remains of a bygone culture whose fullness can only be recreated in their own imaginations. Here, then, is a situation in which the overlap between medieval studies and medievalist practice becomes particularly clear. The early editorial history of the poem offers telling insight into the forms that such medievalist practice could take. As María José Mora has shown, the hunt for manifestations of an early Germanic *Volksgeist* throughout nineteenth-century Europe led not only to the invention of the Old English elegy as a generic category but also shaped the understanding of texts such as *The Ruin* on the level of the line.[58] In their early editions of the poem, both the Conybeare brothers and Benjamin Thorpe read an allusion to old Germanic rulers in its description of the durability of the structure's walling, "oft þæs wag gebad / ræghar ond readfah rice æfter oþrum" (9–10). It is now common to interpret "ræghar" and "readfah" as color words; following other modern translators, I have rendered lines 9–10 as "again and again this wall survived, / lichen gray and red-stained, one kingdom after another." Writing in 1826, the Conybeares assert that these lines "appear to mention Ræghar or Rægnar and Readfah as ancient kings of the city"; and Thorpe, in 1842, translates them "oft this wall withstood / Rægar and Readfah, / chieftain after other."[59] The Conybeares also construe "undereotene" in line 6, which modern translators have seen as the past participle of the verb *underetan* (undermine), as "under Eotene," that is, "under the Jutes." This prompts them to make a connection between the city described in *The Ruin* and the town depicted in *The Fight at Finnsburg*, since "both cities were under the dominion of the Jutes, and both appear to have perished by a similar catastrophe."[60]

The "desire for origins" that has shaped both medieval scholarship and its representation of the objects of its attention was elucidated some time ago by Allen Frantzen.[61] More recent work by scholars such as Dorothy Kim and Helen Young has highlighted the ways in which the medieval past continues to be used to support nationalist and white supremacist dogma internationally, even from within the academy.[62] This essay has shown just how far back the clock might be turned in enquiries into the ideological uses of the medieval past. *The Ruin* demonstrates that the work of medieval-

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ism is not an entirely postmedieval affair as is sometimes claimed.[63] This brief poem allows us to see in miniature that the idea of the Anglo-Saxons' legendary Germanic origins was already being embroidered and adapted in the Anglo-Saxon period itself, long before its appropriation by modern culture and scholarship. Specifically, it demonstrates the intercultural and cross-temporal contexts in which this imagining took place, in this case, via Rome, a city whose example could provoke horror and hope simultaneously.[64] In its careful interweaving of Roman history, the legendary Germanic past, and Anglo-Saxon hopes for the future, *The Ruin* vitiates the case of any twenty-first-century commentator who might wish to claim for the Anglo-Saxons an original status, as yet "uncompromised" by multiple cultural contacts. To deny the existence of medieval medievalisms such as that elaborated in *The Ruin* is thus not only to obfuscate the role that medieval people played in the preparation of their own future receptions; it is also to cordon off an archive of materials in whose study fresh histories of self-perception in the West might be rooted. Marked by the publication of the *Cambridge Companion to Medievalism*, the current atmosphere of détente between proponents of medievalism studies and traditional medieval studies seems propitious for this new historiography.

Notes

This essay grew out of a class that I taught at the University of Bern in the spring semester of 2016. I am grateful to my students and to my former colleagues at Bern for many stimulating conversations relating to the ideas presented here. I am grateful, too, to Arthur Russell, who provided helpful feedback on an early draft of this piece, and to Irina Dumitrescu, who shared her monograph typescript with me prior to its publication. I owe a special debt of gratitude to my anonymous reader at *JMEMS*. His or her generous and actionable critique of my work has helped me considerably to sharpen my argument.

1 *The Cambridge Companion to Medievalism*, ed. Louise D'Arcens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

2 For discussion of these topics and for recent bibliography, see the individual contributions to *The Cambridge Companion to Medievalism*, ed. D'Arcens. On the potentially salutary pleasures of medievalism, see too Thomas A. Prendergast and Stephanie Trigg, "What Is Happening to the Middle Ages?," and Carolyn Dinshaw, "Are We Having Fun Yet? A Response to Prendergast and Trigg," *New Medieval Literatures* 9 (2007): 215–29 and 231–41.

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3 Carolyn Dinshaw, “All Kinds of Time,” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 35 (2013): 3–25, at 4.

4 The *locus classicus* for this argument is Umberto Eco’s essay “Dreaming of the Middle Ages,” in *Faith in Fakes: Essays*, trans. William Weaver (London: Secker and Warburg, 1986), 61–72. See too Brian Stock, “The Middle Ages as Subject and Object: Romantic Attitudes and Academic Medievalism,” *New Literary History* 5, no. 3 (1974): 527–47.

5 See Jacques Le Goff, “Au Moyen Âge: Temps de l’église et temps du marchand,” in *Annales: Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 15, no. 3 (1960): 417–33; and also Aron J. Gurevich, “What Is Time?,” in *Categories of Medieval Culture*, trans. G. L. Campbell (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 93–152.

6 See, for example, Jacques Le Goff, “Pour un long Moyen Âge,” in *L’Imaginaire médiéval: Essais* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), 7–13.

7 John Hines, “Medieval Medievalism and the Onset of the Modern,” in *Voices in the Past: English Literature and Archaeology* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 105–36, at 107.

8 Andrew James Johnston, *Performing the Middle Ages from “Beowulf” to “Othello,”* (Turnhout, Belg.: Brepols, 2008), 12.

9 Chris Jones, “Medievalism in British Poetry,” in *Cambridge Companion to Medievalism*, ed. D’Arcens, 14–28, at 15. See too Stephanie Trigg’s contribution to the *Companion* in which she discusses the nostalgia for an older chivalric order that shapes Malory’s *Morte Darthur* and, earlier in the Middle Ages, the political implications of Edward III’s Arthurian revivalism, which culminated in his foundation of the Order of the Garter in 1348. These creative works of reception are facilitated, Trigg suggests, “by the imaginative possibilities of medievalist temporalities.” Stephanie Trigg, “Medievalism and Theories of Temporality,” in *Cambridge Companion to Medievalism*, ed. D’Arcens, 196–209, at 204.

10 The case that the baths at Bath are those described in *The Ruin* is reexamined and reaffirmed in Karl P. Wentersdorf, “Observations on *The Ruin*,” *Medium Ævum* 46, no. 2 (1977): 171–80.

11 Roberta Frank, “Germanic Legend in Old English Literature,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 88–106, at 88, 92.

12 *The Ruin* is cited by line numbers from *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry: An Edition of Exeter Dean and Chapter MS 3501*, ed. Bernard J. Muir, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000–2006). Translations from Old English are my own throughout. When preparing the translations of *The Ruin*, I also consulted the other standard editions of the poem, in *The Old English Elegies: A Critical Edition and Genre Study*, ed. Anne L. Klinck (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992); and in *Three Old English Elegies: “The Wife’s Lament,” “The Husband’s Message,” “The Ruin,”* ed. R. F. Leslie, rev. ed. (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1988). For a fluid and admirably close translation of *The Ruin* into present-day English, see *Old English Poetry: An Anthology*, ed. and trans. R. M. Liuzza (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview, 2014), 43–44.

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13 On the resonances of this phrase, which occurs frequently in Old English descriptions of Roman remains, see P. J. Frankis, "The Thematic Significance of *Enta Geweorc* and Related Imagery in *The Wanderer*," *Anglo-Saxon England* 2 (1973): 253–69.

14 See S. B. Greenfield, "The Old English Elegies," in *Continuations and Beginnings: Studies in Old English Literature*, ed. Eric Gerald Stanley (London: Nelson, 1966), 142–75, at 143. I address more recent critique of this view below.

15 On these uses of the verb, see Bruce Mitchell, *Old English Syntax*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 1:298–360.

16 On the development of and modern competition between *have*- and *be*-perfects, see Bettelou Los, *A Historical Syntax of English* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 72–84.

17 In the following citations, where I have supplied *sind*, I have placed the verb within square brackets.

18 It will be evident from my translations that *sind* could be used both with singular and plural subjects where Modern English distinguishes clearly between *is* for singulars and *are* for plurals. Here too Old English is more flexible than Modern English. See Mitchell, *Old English Syntax*, 1:13–16.

19 On this point, see Janet Bately, "Time and the Passing of Time in *The Wanderer* and Related OE Texts," *Essays and Studies* n.s. 37 (1984): 1–15. Bately compares the density of compound tenses in *The Ruin* with their "non-use or severely limited occurrence" in *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, and *The Wife's Lament* (11). On the poem's fluid grammar of time, see too Daniel G. Calder, "Perspective and Movement in *The Ruin*," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 72, no. 3 (1971): 442–45.

20 Muir's transcription of the verb form "gewitan" can be checked against the CD facsimile of the Exeter Book that accompanies his edition. A variety of solutions to this crux have been posed. Bately construes *gewitan* as a present subjunctive form (*gewitan* for *gewiten*) ("Time and the Passing of Time," 10 n. 29). Leslie initially posited that *gewitan* is the present infinitive with the modal auxiliary *sculan* (must, shall) understood, but he subsequently deferred to Bruce Mitchell's thesis that a simple past indicative form should be perceived here "used as a perfect tense, as often happens in the absence of a regular perfect in Old English." See Bruce Mitchell, "Some Problems of Mood and Tense in Old English," *Neophilologus* 49, no. 1 (1965): 44–57, at 45; and *Three Old English Elegies*, ed. Leslie, 69. Muir and Klinck also follow Mitchell. Two verbs in *The Ruin* do conjugate plural forms of the simple past with the suffix *–an* instead of the regular *–on* ending, which predominates in *The Ruin*: "cwoman" [came] (25) and "stodan" [stood] (38). But in both these cases, reference to past time is indicated by Ablaut; by the quality of their vowels these forms are clearly distinguished from their infinitives: *cumman* (to come) and *standan* (to stand). By contrast, "gewitan" remains ambiguous. It could be construed as a past simple form (*gewitan* for *gewiton*), but, unlike *cwoman* and *stodan*, it also looks like a present infinitive. Moreover, it is not immediately clear that "gewitan" construed as a past simple form would have been reprocessed as referring to perfect time in a poem where, as we have seen, compound perfects are in use, *pace* Mitchell. In all likelihood, the confusion surrounding "gewitan" that is evident in modern scholarship was shared by the work's first audiences. My point is that the verb poses a temporal enigma; it encapsulates on

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a morphological level the problem of time's passing, which is thematized in lines 3–9 of *The Ruin*.

21 On these points, see Bernard J. Muir, "Issues for Editors of Anglo-Saxon Poetry in Manuscript Form," in *Inside Old English: Essays in Honour of Bruce Mitchell*, ed. John Walmsley (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 181–202.

22 On these features of the poem, see Andy Orchard, "Reconstructing *The Ruin*," in *Intertexts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture Presented to Paul E. Szarmach*, ed. Virginia Blanton and Helene Scheck (Turnhout, Belg.: Brepols, 2008), 45–68.

23 Dinshaw, "All Kinds of Time," 5.

24 Kathleen Davis, "Old English Lyrics: A Poetics of Experience," in *The Cambridge History of Early Medieval English Literature*, ed. Clare A. Lees (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 332–56, at 334. Davis briefly presents *The Ruin* as the ultimate demonstration of her point: "No other Old English poem captures quite so precisely the foundational nature of transience—to life, narrative, experience, history, and an open future" (356).

25 For a physical description of the Exeter Book, now Exeter, Cathedral Library of the Dean and Chapter, MS 3501, see *The Exeter Anthology*, ed. Muir, 1–41. Here and elsewhere in my citations of the text, as in Muir's edition, illegible portions of the poem are indicated by ellipses within square brackets.

26 As Edward B. Irving has pointed out, the symbolic use of walls to refer simultaneously to human ingenuity and vulnerability is a conceit that *The Ruin* shares with other Old English poems. See Edward B. Irving Jr., "Image and Meaning in the Elegies," in *Old English Poetry: Fifteen Essays*, ed. Robert P. Creed (Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1967), 153–66.

27 Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 10.

28 See James F. Doubleday, "*The Ruin*: Structure and Theme," *JEGP: Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 71, no. 3 (1972): 369–81. Hugh T. Keenan went so far as to claim that the setting of the poem was the destroyed city of Babylon, but this view has not won much support. See Hugh T. Keenan, "*The Ruin* as Babylon," *Tennessee Studies in Literature* 11 (1966): 109–17.

29 On this point, see Kathryn Hume, "The 'Ruin Motif' in Old English Poetry," *Anglia* 94 (1976): 339–60.

30 For translations of the Latin analogues, see *Sources and Analogues of Old English Poetry: The Major Latin Texts in Translation*, trans. Michael J. B. Allen and Daniel G. Calder (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1976).

31 See Anne Thompson Lee, "*The Ruin*: Bath or Babylon? A Non-Archaeological Investigation," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 74, no. 3 (1973): 443–55. On the *encomium urbis* and the place of *The Ruin* in this tradition, see too Paolo Zanna, "'Descriptiones urbium' and Elegy in Latin and Vernaculars in the Early Middle Ages," *Studi Medievali* 32 (1991): 523–96, at 549–62.

32 The *þing* in question might be an object or, as Leslie points out, if the opening of line 49 can be read "hu se" [how the], there might have followed a final consideration of the processes behind the structure's making or its once normal functioning (*Three Old English Elegies*, 76).

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33 See, for example, R. M. Liuzza, "The Tower of Babel: *The Wanderer* and the Ruins of History," *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 36, no. 1 (2003): 1–35, at 9–10; and Renée R. Trilling, "Ruins in the Realm of Thoughts: Reading as Constellation in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," *JEGP: Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 108, no. 2 (2009): 141–67, at 158–67.

34 The inclusion of the runic symbol in *The Ruin* is a feature of the poem that it shares with several of the riddles in whose proximity it is preserved in the Exeter Book, for instance. On the use of runes in Anglo-Saxon England, see Robert DiNapoli, "Odd Characters: Runes in Old English Poetry," in *Verbal Encounters: Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse Studies for Roberta Frank*, ed. Antonina Harbus and Russell Poole (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 145–61.

35 *The Seafarer* is cited by line numbers from *The Exeter Anthology*, ed. Muir; *Beowulf* is cited by line numbers from *Klaeber's "Beowulf" and "The Fight at Finnsburg,"* ed. R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles, 4th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008). On parallels between the feasting scenes depicted in *Beowulf* and in *The Ruin*, see Helena Znojemská, "*The Ruin*: A Reading of the Old English Poem," *Litteraria Pragensia* 8, no. 15 (1998): 15–33, at 25–26.

36 Michael Hunter, "Germanic and Roman Antiquity and the Sense of the Past in Anglo-Saxon England," *Anglo-Saxon England* 3 (1974): 29–50, at 48.

37 Frank's thinking on the Anglo-Saxons' uses of their pagan past is fundamental to my approach here. Besides her "Germanic Legend in Old English Literature," see too Roberta Frank, "The *Beowulf* Poet's Sense of History," in *The Wisdom of Poetry: Essays in Early English Literature in Honor of Morton W. Bloomfield*, ed. Larry D. Benson and Siegfried Wenzel (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 1982), 53–65.

38 Irina Dumitrescu, *The Experience of Education in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 128.

39 On *translatio imperii*, see the classic discussion in Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2013), 28–29.

40 On travel between England and Rome and its impact on the development of English culture earlier in the Anglo-Saxon period, see Bertram Colgrave, "Pilgrimages to Rome in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries," in *Studies in Language, Literature, and Culture of the Middle Ages and Later: Essays in Honor of Rudolph Willard*, ed. E. Bagby Atwood and Archibald A. Hill (Austin: University of Texas at Austin, 1969), 156–72. On the later period, see Veronica Ortenberg, "Archbishop Sigeric's Pilgrimage to Rome in 990," *Anglo-Saxon England* 19 (1990): 197–246; and Ortenberg, *The English Church and the Continent in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries: Cultural, Spiritual, and Artistic Exchanges* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). The picture painted in these studies has been refined by individual contributions to *England and Rome in the Early Middle Ages: Pilgrimage, Art, and Politics*, ed. Francesca Tinti (Turnhout, Belg.: Brepols, 2014).

41 See Nicholas Howe, "Rome: Capital of Anglo-Saxon England," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34, no. 1 (2004): 147–72.

42 See M. R. Godden, "The Anglo-Saxons and the Goths: Rewriting the Sack of Rome," *Anglo-Saxon England* 31 (2002): 47–68, at 49–54.

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43 *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 40–41.

44 The Latin is cited from *Orose: Histoires*, ed. Marie-Pierre Arnaud-Lindet, 3 vols. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1990–91), 3:117. The translation is cited from *Orosius: Seven Books of History against the Pagans*, trans. A. T. Fear (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 404.

45 Whereas Augustine presented the fall of Rome as a necessary precondition of God's dominion, Orosius stressed the endurance of the Christian city. On this difference between Augustine and Orosius, see Michael I. Allen, "Universal History, 300–1000: Origins and Western Developments," in *Historiography in the Middle Ages*, ed. Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 17–41, at 26–32.

46 In light of recent work on the Alfredian prose corpus, the personal association of these works with the king now seems much less certain than it once did. See, for example, Malcom Godden, "Alfredian Prose: Myth and Reality," *Filologia Germanica* 5 (2013): 131–58. The elaboration of what Godden calls the "legend of Alfred" (145) both during his reign and after it nevertheless suggests that the audiences of these works overlapped.

47 For detailed discussion of these and related primary texts, see Godden, "The Anglo-Saxons and the Goths," 54–66.

48 Godden, 67.

49 Many years ago, Margaret Deanesley argued that the adoption in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* of the term *Bretwalda* to describe the fifth-century king of the South Saxons, Ælle, amounted to a retrospective attempt to style the early Saxon invaders as the inheritors of the Roman occupation. More recently, Nicholas Brooks has pointed out that the Anglo-Saxons' frequent recourse to Roman Christian precedent effectively wrote the Britons out of insular history. See Margaret Deanesley, "Roman Traditionalist Influence among the Anglo-Saxons," *English Historical Review* 58 (1943): 129–46, at 131–36; and Nicholas Brooks, "Canterbury, Rome, and the Construction of English Identity," in *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West: Essays in Honour of Donald A. Bullough*, ed. Julia M. H. Smith (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 221–47. Although he is keener to downplay the Anglo-Saxon interest in antiquity, Yann Coz describes the use of Roman history to understand a moment of national crisis in the work of Ælfric; see "The Image of Roman History in Anglo-Saxon England," in *England and the Continent in the Tenth Century: Studies in Honour of Wilhelm Levinson (1876–1947)*, ed. David Rollason, Conrad Leyser, and Hannah Williams (Turnhout, Belg.: Brepols, 2010), 545–58.

50 On the currency of the *Historiae* in England, see Michael Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 323.

51 On the Anglo-Saxon tendency to compare the Viking incursions with the barbarian invasions of Rome, see Susan Irvine, "The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the Idea of Rome in Alfredian Literature," in *Alfred the Great: Papers from the Eleventh-Centenary Conferences*, ed. Timothy Reuter (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003), 63–77.

52 See Mary Kate Hurley, "Alfredian Temporalities: Time and Translation in the Old English *Orosius*," *JEGP: Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 112, no. 4 (2013): 405–32.

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53 On the speaker's decision to depict a Roman ruin as opposed to a British one, see Nicholas Howe, "The Landscape of Anglo-Saxon England: Inherited, Invented, Imagined," in *Inventing Medieval Landscapes: Senses of Place in Western Europe*, ed. John Howe and Michael Wolfe (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), 91–112, at 93.

54 On this point, see R. I. Page, *Anglo-Saxon Aptitudes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 23.

55 Leslie tentatively argues that dialectal features in *The Ruin* suggest its origins in Mercia, the Anglo-Saxon kingdom that held Bath during the eighth century, which is when Leslie thinks that the poem was originally written (*Three Old English Elegies*, ed. Leslie, 33–36). More recently, Christopher Abram's assessment of the poem's stylistic affiliations has led him to argue for its composition in a Wessex milieu, and Anne L. Klinck's editorial work has identified dialectal features suggesting that the Exeter Book was copied from exemplars already produced and circulating in Wessex by the first half of the tenth century. See Christopher Abram, "In Search of Lost Time: Aldhelm and *The Ruin*," *Quaestio: Selected Proceedings of the Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic* 1 (2000): 23–44; and *Old English Elegies*, ed. Klinck, 15. For the dating of the Exeter Book to ca. 965–75, see *Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry*, ed Muir, 1:1.

56 The continuing interest in the Old English *Orosius* in the early tenth century has likewise been attributed to its engagement with the story of Rome. See Francis Leneghan, "*Translatio Imperii*: The Old English *Orosius* and the Rise of Wessex," *Anglia* 133, no. 4 (2015): 656–705.

57 As noted in Orchard, "Reconstructing *The Ruin*," 45.

58 See María José Mora, "The Invention of the Old English Elegy," *English Studies* 76, no. 2 (1995): 129–39, at 134–35.

59 See *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, ed. John Josias Conybeare and William Daniel Conybeare (London, 1826), 252; and *Codex Exoniensis: A Collection of Anglo-Saxon Poetry from a Manuscript in the Library of the Dean and Chapter of Exeter*, ed. Benjamin Thorpe (London, 1842), 476.

60 See *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, ed. Conybeare and Conybeare, 251.

61 See Allen J. Frantzen, *Desire for Origins: New Language, Old English, and Teaching the Tradition* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1990). See too Richard Utz, "Academic Medievalism and Nationalism," in *Cambridge Companion to Medievalism*, ed. D'Arcens, 119–34.

62 See, for example, Dorothy Kim, "Teaching Medieval Studies in a Time of White Supremacy"; Helen Young, "White Supremacists Love the Middle Ages"; and Young, "Medievalfail," blogposts published in August 2017 at *In the Middle*, www.inthemedievalmiddle.com.

63 See, for example, Mike Rodman Jones, "Early Modern Medievalism," in *Cambridge Companion to Medievalism*, ed. D'Arcens, 89–102. Jones begins his argument with the assertion, which he acknowledges to be "inherently controversial," that "[f]or medievalism of any kind to exist, the Middle Ages need to be over" (89).

64 My argument regarding the cultural attachments of *The Ruin* might be pursued via fresh readings of other Old English poems in which the description of "enta geweorc"

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[the work of giants] has been found to have Roman connotations (e.g., *Andreas*, *Maxims II*, and *The Wanderer*); see Frankis, "The Thematic Significance of *Enta Geweorc*," 257. On possible Roman connotations in the description of the dragon's "stanbeorh" in *Beowulf* (2213), which is also described as "enta geweorc" (2717 and 2774), see E. V. Thornbury, "*Eald Enta Geworc* and the Relics of Empire: Revisiting the Dragon's Lair in *Beowulf*," *Quaestio: Selected Proceedings of the Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic* 1 (2000): 82–92.

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