EX ECCLESIA: SALVIFIC POWER BEYOND SACRED SPACE IN ANGLO-SAXON CHARMS

Ciaran Arthur

Many of the Anglo-Saxon charms identify locations for their performance and function. Previous scholarship has used locations as evidence of continuous pre-Christian practices and this argument has impacted on how the charms are perceived. As a result, the role of the church building as one of the charms' identified locations has not yet been properly highlighted. Rather than focusing on the potential pre-Christian associations with certain sites in the charms, it is more enlightening to look at how other locations orientate around the church building. In this article I will explore how charms use liturgical and public spaces to signify their function during the late Anglo-Saxon period. After outlining the main scholarly views of Anglo-Saxon locations that have had an impact on charm studies, my analysis will make a comparative case study of two charms against elf-sickness to open readings of the corpus of Anglo-Saxon charms. This approach reveals interesting information about the Anglo-Saxons' interaction with their landscape in the tenth and eleventh centuries and helps us to redefine the religious nature of these rituals.

Key words: Anglo-Saxon, sacred space, locations, landscape, charms, ritual, paganism, liturgy.

The Anglo-Saxon charms are various recorded rituals dating to the tenth and eleventh centuries. During this time efforts were made to promote religious devotion, renew learning and improve the religious and secular institutions in England. Jonathan Roper says that charms "could be defined as traditional verbal forms intended by their effect on supernature to bring about change in the world in which we live" (Roper 2003a: 8). Through their performative verbal features and their range of subjects, the charms provided a useful instrument for lay edification and they attempted to bring about change in a range of different circumstances through spiritual means. The very function of these charms was to promote Christian power in the wider community by transporting it from the church to the wider world. This was most effectively done by the charms' use of sacred words that incorporate and apply liturgical power to everyday circumstances. These words of power effected change in the material world beyond the church simultaneous to their recital.[1]

In this article I discuss how a significant number of the charms use locations to transmit Christian power to the wider community. John Hirsh has recently commented that "the extent to which charms could reach out to ritual needs to be explored further" (Hirsh 2012: 145). Locations provide one major approach through which we may understand the charms as a response to the community's ritual needs. I first discuss the criteria for identifying a 'location' in these texts and briefly outline how designated sites become the charms' threshold of ritual power. I then address how locations have been interpreted in other Old English studies and used as evidence of a surviving Anglo-Saxon paganism. This argument has impacted on interpretations of the charms and presented them as evidence of continuous pagan rituals with Christian substitutions. The charms show that different landmarks obtained spiritual significance by their orientation around the church building and they acquired efficacy from liturgical power. This evidence provides much more enlightening views of how the charms served the needs of English communities in the late Anglo-Saxon period than current preconceived ideas of paganism in these rituals. Following this, I provide an overview of the scholarly attention given to the Christian significance of locations in charms in a number of isolated examples. Finally, I take two different case studies from the corpus of Anglo-Saxon charms that demonstrate how liturgical and public spaces are used to transfer Christian power from the church building. By comparing how different charms use locations in similar ways to represent spiritual power, a broader perspective of the Anglo-Saxon landscape is gained and new interpretations of the charms corpus are opened. An understanding of where the church building features among other sites adds to our understanding of how sacred space was viewed in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

'LOCATIONS' AND THEIR FUNCTION

In Godfrid Storms' corpus of eighty-six Anglo-Saxon charms, I have identified twenty-eight that explicitly name certain locations in the vernacular. Other charms name locations in Latin and some use both languages to signify certain sites. As the locations that are named in Latin ultimately derive from continental sources, I will focus on the appearances of locations in the vernacular as these reflect an effort to adapt rituals from their sources to the contemporary Anglo-Saxon environment. Identifying performative 'locations' in Anglo-Saxon charms can pose problems as it is sometimes difficult to distinguish a proper location from a non-specific area. Roper states that nearly all of the English charms name general sites except for Biblical locations:

> the micronarratives we find in charms are usually located in a landscape, these places, unless they are Biblical locations such as the River Jordan, the Mount of Olives, Bethlehem or Jerusalem, tend to be referred in general terms, such as 'the bridge', or 'a road', or 'the wood' (Roper 2006: 72).

Two charms against theft (Storms 1948: 206–8) identify the town of Bethlehem for its associated spiritual power but these charms were obviously not intended to be performed there. The invocation of Bethlehem reflects "the Biblical, and specifically New Testament, character of the landscape and personnel of English narrative charms" (Roper 2006: 68). These charms effectively map Biblical locations onto the Anglo-Saxon landscape, thus investing sites with spiritual power. I have included these places, or "settlement names" in the vernacular (Roper 2006: 68), under the criteria for a location as they are still identifiable sites that have some bearing on the charms' power beyond the church.

The other identifiable sites are liturgical, domestic and public locations that are mostly found in a charm's performative instructions (see Appendix). To the modern reader these locations appear 'in general terms', to use Roper's phrase, but the sites of performance would have been identifiable to the Anglo-Saxon performer and community. I have therefore included the sites of houses, gardens, streams, graves and fields in my criteria. On the other hand, when the phrases 'the earth' or 'over your shoulder' or 'on the ground' are used, the site of performance is not restricted to a particular place. The locations I discuss are therefore defined as areas of specific sites and landmarks known to the performer and community in which the charm utilises spiritual power, or by which it gains power through referencing a Biblical place.

Edina Bozóky discusses the significance of some such locations as thresholds of power:

> As places of *passage*, one finds in the Latin formulae locations such as 'before the gate' of the town; 'on the bridge', 'on the threshold', and most obviously, 'on the road', mentioned explicitly or not, but essential in the incantations with an *encounter* motif (Bozóky 1992: 90).

One example of an Anglo-Saxon text that demonstrates an encounter through locations is the *Epistola Salvatoris*. This text is an apocryphal letter from Christ to Abgar, contained in London, British Library, Royal 2 A. xx. The *Epistola* has strong connections to some charms as it functions as "a literal shield against harm… [from] a belief in the magical efficacy of the repetition of sacred words" (Cain 2009: 186). This particular text demonstrates the use of a number of different locations to signify the dissemination of spiritual power:

> Siue *in domu* tua siue *in ciuitate* tua siue *in omni loco* nemo inimicorum
> tuorum dominabitur et insidias diabuli ne timeas et carmina inimicorum
> tuorum distruuntur… ab omni periculo liberaueris, *siue in mare siue in
> terra* siue in die siue in nocte siue *in locis obscures*. Si quis hanc epistolam
> secum habuerit secures ambulet in pace. Amen.

> *whether **in your home** or **in your city** or **in any place**, none of your
> enemies will have dominion, and you need not fear the treacheries of the
> devil and the curses of your enemies will be broken… you will be free from
> all dangers, **whether on sea** or **on land**, whether in day or in night, or
> **in strange places**, whoever has this letter with him will go about safely
> in peace. Amen* (Cain 2009: 176–7, emphasis mine).

Given that the above passage was added to the *Epistola* by an Anglo-Saxon
scribe, it demonstrates the same use of geographical space for spiritual sig-
nificance as many of the charms. Texts like these served to protect the subject
in places beyond the church by their written and spoken words of power. The
efficacy of this ritual protection is increased when sites are named to signify
where the text's power is most effective beyond sacred space. This spiritual
encounter motif is also found in the vernacular formulae of the charms. The
locations they name are nearly always in direct relation to the church, whether
to the church building itself or to objects and words from the liturgy. The lo-
cations beyond the church building become 'places of passage' because they
are the sites where communal disorder is overcome by Christian power. The
charms' use of locations demonstrates their dependence upon Christian power
when they are performed beyond the church building. The locations that they
identify completely contrast with current views of the Anglo-Saxons' spiritual
landscape. I will now outline how Anglo-Saxon sites have been presented by
scholars and how their views have influenced our understanding of the charms'
religious nature.

THE RELIGIOUS IMPLICATIONS OF A LOCATION

A prevailing view of the religious implications of Anglo-Saxon sites has directly
impacted on charm studies. This viewpoint holds that certain locations testify
to *continuous* pagan worship among the Anglo-Saxons. Others have held that
these sites reveal only the *origins* of pre-Christian religious practices and that
they do not necessarily indicate the survival of pagan worship. Unfortunately,
only the first of these viewpoints has significantly influenced interpretations of
the charms. The charms have therefore been presented as examples of a con-

tinuous Anglo-Saxon paganism that uses the landscape for worship and their locations have been highlighted as evidence of this. The presence and the role of the church have not been acknowledged in such discussions.

William Chaney attempted to remove all evidence of Christianity in the landscape to emphasise the existence of continuous pagan worship in a number of Old English texts:

> the Roman road has been so broad and so well marked with recorded militaria that we may have missed the growth-ridden Germanic by-paths which were actually trod by the tribes in England… As the gods – Woden or others – were metamorphosed into giants, barrows were named for them, evidence for which dates from Saxon times… One need not go so far, however, to see more heathenism lurking behind the manuscripts and artefacts than is visible to the twentieth century eye (Chaney 1960: 197, 202, 217).

Scholars like Chaney frequently drew upon evidence from place-names to support their view that pagan worship continued in later Anglo-Saxon England (see Gelling 1962 and Cavill 1999: 21–2). Audrey Meaney countered this view of continuous non-Christian worship by stating that any remnants of Anglo-Saxon paganism would have been "half-memories" by the eighth century and extremely unlikely by the tenth and eleventh centuries (Meaney 1966: 109). More recently, Michael Bintley and Michael Shapland have criticised the "pseudo-scholarship and fanciful mythologizing about druids, wizards, green men, and the like" that have grown out of Anglo-Saxon landscape studies (Bintley and Shapland 2013: 2). Shapland also points out that the presence of Roman Christian buildings in the Anglo-Saxon landscape has been emphasised "at the expense of existing British and Irish Christian practice" (Shapland 2013: 28). Despite these helpful counter-arguments, viewpoints like Chaney's continue to impact on charm studies. In his discussion of the demonological landscapes of two Christian battle poems, *Solomon and Saturn* I and II, Peter Dendle also holds that the poems were written in the same spirit as the account of Ragnarökr in Old Norse mythology:

> It is not certain the Anglo-Saxons would have had this particular Germanic myth in mind… nonetheless, this is unquestionably the spirit in which the text is to be approached… [with its] unashamedly literal and folkloric affirmation of the devil as a natural menace, driving cows mad and wandering through the countryside (Dendle 1999: 287, 291).

Locations from Christian battle poems are even used as evidence of Christianised folklore that has simply substituted a surviving Germanic paganism. More

recently, Paola Tornaghi discusses the religious nature of charms according to their surrounding world:

> Whoever the practitioner is, he/she is never named. In none of the ana-lysed charms, indeed, the figure of the wizard, the exorcist, the magician or the witch is never mentioned… Certain personal qualities would have transformed a person into a magician. Those who wished to act as magi-cians were likely to possess some psychic powers… The pagans had a strong belief in their ability to communicate with their deities; they also believed that their words could have a direct effect on their surrounding world. Anglo-Saxon charms prove that Christianity could not hold back the pagans' faith in their magical powers and attest to the enduring qual-ity of a deep-seated belief in magic (Tornaghi 2010: 443, 464).

Tornaghi's portrayal of these Anglo-Saxon rituals has serious implications about the literary historian's approach to the past and their responsibility in present-ing correct evidence. The impact of Chaney's arguments is very much evident in Tornaghi's work as she removes all traces of the charms' Christian content. The 'surrounding world' of the pagan users of Anglo-Saxon charms is promoted at the expense of the texts' explicit Christian elements and their use in the church building. These views of the spirituality of the Anglo-Saxon landscape continue to influence our understanding of locations in charms.

The scholars who advocate this view of a surviving paganism in the land-scape turn to accounts by Bede and Ælfric to support their arguments. Pope Gregory's letter to Abbot Mellitus, from the turn of the seventh century and recounted in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, makes specific mention of places with inherent spiritual potency:

> Tell Augustine that he should by no means destroy the temples of the gods but rather the idols within those temples. Let him, after he has purified them with holy water, place altars and relics of the saints in them… seeing that their places of worship are not destroyed, the people will banish error from their hearts and come to places familiar and dear to them in acknowledgement and worship of the true God… Let them therefore, on the day of the dedication of their churches, or on the feast of the martyrs whose relics are preserved in them, build themselves huts around their one-time temples and celebrate the occasion with religious feasting (Colgrave and Mynors 1993: I, 30).

This letter indicates that specific locations of non-Christian worship were es-tablished before the arrival of Christian missionaries in England. Another document frequently quoted is from Ælfric's sermon *On Auguries* that claims:

Sume men synd swa ablende þæt hi bringað heora lac to eorðfæstum stane and eac to treowum and to wylspringum swa swa wiccan tæcað and nellað under-standan hu stuntlice hi doð oððe hu se deada stan oððe þæt dumbe treow him mæge gehelpan oððe hæle forgifan þone hi syfe ne astyriað of ðære stowe næfre.

Some men are so blinded, that they bring their offerings to an earth-fast stone, and eke to trees, and to well-springs, even as witches teach, and will not understand how foolishly they act, or how the dead stone or the dumb tree can help them, or give them health, when they themselves never stir from the place (Skeat 1966: 372–5).[2]

Although these accounts indicate a survival of pre-Christian practices, there are problems with taking this information at face value. Bede recorded Gregory's letter concerning the Anglo-Saxon conversion over a hundred years after the letter was written. Rather than providing evidence of sites where paganism was continually practised in England, Gregory's letter confirms the central position of the church building as early as the sixth and seventh centuries. Ælfric's account, on the other hand, is contemporary with the surviving Anglo-Saxon charms. He takes issue with associating spiritual power with specific sites and their healing properties and he condemns such rituals as abominations unless they contain the cross, the Paternoster and the "holy house of God" (see Thorpe 1844: 475–7). Ælfric's description makes it clear that people who went to certain landmarks for healing power did not actively do so for pagan worship as they evidently did not know the theological nature of the power they sought ("ablende", "stuntlice"). Ælfric is saying that traditional healing practices should be formed by the liturgy of the Church so that the power of Christianity is affirmed in daily life. Indeed, there are no Anglo-Saxon laws that prohibit these healing rituals, provided they did not invoke a non-Christian power (see Crawford 1963: 107). Ælfric probably even endorsed the use of healing rituals as long as they complied with ecclesiastical agendas of the late Anglo-Saxon period. The places associated with healing were to become sites of public and private Christian ritual. The charms provide examples of this movement rather than a continued, conscious paganism.

This view of continuous pagan worship in the landscape has influenced interpretations of the religious nature of the charms. Felix Grendon argued that the ecclesiastical authorities "assaulted beliefs but respected customs", customs which were also still held by native clergy (Grendon 1909: 143). He argued that the sites of performance became Christianised but retained the same pre-Christian features, for example "when a saint replaced the elfin genius as patron of a stream or well" (Grendon 1909: 144). Bruce Rosenberg likewise

developed the same ideas in his account of the *Æcerbot* charm. He connected wooden objects with the spiritual potency of trees and held that the field became the central location of a pagan ritual (Rosenberg 1966: 429, 434). Thomas Hill recently attempted to broaden the scope of how scholars view this so-called 'paganism' in a study of the *Journey Charm*. He claims that a wider perspective may open through discussions of cultural practices instead of reconstructing a living, non-Christian religion:

> if by 'paganism' one simply means those aspects of the culture and literature of the Anglo-Saxon peoples which were to one degree or another significantly influenced by pre-Christian religious tradition and practice, then the scope of what we may define as Anglo-Saxon paganism is much broader (Hill 2012: 146).

It is entirely plausible that the supernatural agency attributed to locations in the charms originates from pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon culture. However, the view that such spiritual practices at these landmarks continued as later "cultural paganism" (Hill 2012: 146) or "ill-defined animism" (Cavill 1999: 21) has been promoted to the point where the clear relationships between these sites and the church have been neglected.

Of the twenty-eight texts that identify locations in the corpus of charms, there are three that name a site but do not mention the church nor any other object or signifier associated with the church (nos. 1, 3 and 4 in Appendix). These three charms could be thought of as examples of ritual practices that have escaped Christian influence and that associate locations with non-Christian spiritual power. One (Appendix no. 1) uses locations to settle bees at the performer's home and away from a wood. Another (Appendix no. 3) uses locations in its sacred words to command hostile forces to move to a hill or mountain. The third (Appendix no. 4) simply identifies a stream and a house as sites for performance. Although these charms do not mention any Christian concepts or liturgical objects, it is not the case that the locations they identify have a non-Christian significance or reflect any 'cultural paganism'. Due to the absence of any explicit spiritual reference, the religious nature of these texts is enigmatic. We can, however, see that the locations are used for different degrees of separation and correlation. There is evident separation between personal property and a wood (in no. 1) and between a settlement and a mountain (in no. 3). These locations are used to mark off the Anglo-Saxon community from other environments to which hostile forces are expelled. The stream and the house (in no. 4) are used to connect the community to a river that signifies sustenance and vitalisation, if not baptism and spiritual regeneration. We cannot force readings of the charms' religious nature onto these texts but their emphasis on separation and

correlation is useful when considering the Anglo-Saxons' identification with different areas of the landscape.

As there are only three charms of twenty-eight which do not explicitly connect locations with Christian power, it is evidently more beneficial to discuss how the majority of identified locations are used to portray sacred space in the Anglo-Saxon landscape during the tenth and eleventh centuries:

> A historical explanation of the meaning of… charms that places their origins, and thus their meanings, in pre-Christian religion does not, however, explain the context in which charms were recorded, nor their meaning in those contexts, especially since these explanations rely on assumptions rather than on attested manuscript or ethnographic evidence (Gay 2004: 40).

The evidence of the charms does not explicitly demonstrate that spiritual power is to be found *in* locations other than the church. They gain spiritual significance because of their relationship to the church building and its associated liturgical elements. This observation has been neglected because of the attempt to identify pagan sites. Rather than the inherent pagan spiritual force contained in wells, woods and stones, the charms show that it was the church building that dominated the spiritual landscape.

STUDIES OF CHRISTIAN LOCATIONS IN CHARMS

There have been a limited number of different discussions about the Christian significance of locations in the charms. However, very few of these have highlighted the role of the church in the landscape. Karen Jolly has suggested that charms were composed to infiltrate the "level of village and home" in the centuries after the Christian missions (Jolly 1996: 44–5). She also argues that the charms aided in substituting previous "animistic worship" with local cults of saints (Jolly 1996: 67). In her discussion of the archaeological evidence of churches, Jolly briefly highlights the significance of the church building "as a permanent part of the rural landscape" (Jolly 1996: 67). She does not, however, discuss the church's presence in relation to other locations identified in charms. Edina Bozóky has also discussed the symbolism of sites in medieval narrative charms as places of "transition from illness to healing" (Bozóky 2013: 105), and her examples of such locations include heaven and earth, mountains and rivers and Biblical locations. However, Bozóky's analysis focuses only on Latin charms with healing narratives and she does not discuss the significance of the church in relation to these locations.

There have been a small number of interpretations of spiritual sites in individual charms. The *Journey Charm* (Storms 1948: 216–19) is a text that uses a number of locations to seek and obtain divine protection on a journey (see Appendix no. 13). Heather Stuart has argued that the locations identified in this charm – such as a protective circle, the "wega Serafhin" ('Seraph of the paths', 30), "wereþum" ('to/from the shores', 35) and "circinde wæter" ('encircling water/sea', 36) – all refer to the spiritual life (Stuart 1981: 266–7, 272–3). Marion Amies developed this idea by focusing exclusively on the significance of the locations *wereþum* and *wega Serafhin*, and by proposing that these two locations reveal an eschatological message for the Christian (Amies 1983: 452–5, 456–8). The locations of the *Journey Charm* have only been discussed in reference to this text and the interpretations of their usage have not been extended to other charms from the corpus. Indeed, the relation of these locations to the church has not been explored and this would provide interesting readings of the practical function of this charm beyond the church building.

The theft charms (Storms 1948: 202–17) are a group of texts that have received much attention and their locations have been commented upon for different reasons (see Appendix nos. 8–12). Thomas Hill argued that the use of four directions in two theft charms signifies the cosmological cross, thus making the ritual the spiritual locus of divine power (Hill 1978: 490). Stephanie Hollis resituated the theft charms in their manuscript contexts, claiming that this approach exposes their role in a pastoralia programme (Hollis 1997: 161). She further claims that these rituals were performed by the laity according to the locations that they use and their apparent lack of liturgical content (Hollis 1997: 154–5). This view is strongly disputed by Tracey-Anne Cooper who uses the theft charms' manuscript contexts to argue for their episcopal performance. Cooper proposes that two different manuscripts containing a theft-rite reflect a bishop's performance of legal power in the community (Cooper 2010). Although comparisons have been made between different theft charms, the readings of their locations have not been applied to the performative sites of other charms. Once more the significance of the church as a landmark influencing the charms' performance has not been highlighted.

Two further charms that have received attention for the spiritual significance of their locations both concern agricultural problems. *Wiþ Ymbe* (Storms 1948: 132–41) is a charm for a swarm of bees and two of its commentators have highlighted the locations it names (see Appendix no. 1). Austin Fife was the first to discuss the Christian nature of this charm, claiming that its second half is predominantly concerned with the church, although this is not actually an identified site (Fife 1964: 158). Fife argues that the ritual centres around the church building as the "wuda" ('wood', 9) marks a perimeter around a

cultivated monastery and the "eþeles" ('homeland', 11) refers to the welfare of the bee-keeper and the monastic community (Fife 1964: 154, 157). More recently, Lori Ann Garner and Kayla Miller have made a comparison of this charm with modern bee-keeping practices, concluding that the ritual was an effective declaration of property ownership expressed through locations (Garner and Miller 2011: 370–2). The locations named in the bee charm reflect similar public performances of property ownership as the theft charms. However, as is the case with the other discussions of sites in individual charms, *Wiþ Ymbe* has only been discussed in isolation and the significance of its locations has not been applied to the Anglo-Saxon charms as a whole.[3]

The *Æcerbot* (Storms 1948: 172–87) is the only other charm that has received attention for the Christian significance of its locations. John Niles comes closest to acknowledging the central role of the church building in the charms as this ritual for reviving crops contains an extensive number of different sites for performance (see Appendix no. 5). Niles observes that although most of the prescribed actions and words are to be carried out in the field, the church is constantly attended throughout the course of the ritual and it directly impacts on the performance outside of the church building:

> The rite would have been so dramatic a visual and auditory experience, from sunup to sundown, with the processions from the fields to the church and from the church to the fields, with the singing of the masses and the chanting of the prayers, that the attention of an entire community would have been riveted on the act of opening the fields (Niles 1980: 56).

This is the best description of the centrality of the church building in the landscape of the charms. Once more, the locations of this charm are discussed in isolation and this dominant feature of the charms as whole remains to be considered.

The charms are dependent on Christian signifiers, prayers and liturgical objects for their power but they are nearly always prescribed for performance outside of the church building, beyond sacred space and the locus of Christian ritual. When the church building is mentioned it has central significance as the charm's source of power. Roper calls charms a "type of code-communication, with the particular means of encoding information that they deploy" (Roper 2003b: 22). The charms use locations to signify where spiritual information is encoded (the church) and to whence it is deployed (beyond the church). The encoded power of the charms brought Christian power into everyday life and deployed it according to specific circumstances. It has been argued by Linda Voigts (1979), Maria Amalia D'Aronco (1988), Stanley Rubin (1989) and Robert Nokes (2004) that ritual remedies were most likely produced and performed

in a monastic setting. However, the monastery is never actually identified in any of the texts. By returning to the actual content of the charms, we see how the Anglo-Saxons viewed sacred space and extended it to other locations. The religious implications of key sites in the landscape and a revision of how these locations have been viewed by scholars are of paramount importance in understanding this function of the Anglo-Saxon charms. This approach dismantles preconceptions of a continuous paganism in late Anglo-Saxon England and redefines the charms as Christian rituals that transferred liturgical power to the wider community.

The two texts I will now compare as case studies belong to a sub-group of Anglo-Saxon charms that address elf-related sickness. This group has been expertly analysed by Alaric Hall who argues that the elf-diseases they counter are caused by internal pains and claims that the charms construct a social reality rather than reflect an objective belief-system based on supernatural locations:

> My guiding assumption is that within Anglo-Saxon world-views, *ælfe* were a 'social reality'. They were not an objective reality, like houses and trees, which can be readily perceived in the physical world and, insofar as anything can be, objectively proven to exist… I argue for subtler reconstructions of the relationship between Anglo-Saxons and their world, to which the concept of the supernatural is central and powerful (Hall 2007: 9, 12).

In full agreement with Hall, my analysis of these elf-charms re-situates their spiritual worldview according to the locations that they name. Instead of providing evidence of supernatural agency in specific landmarks from whence elves attacked humans, these case studies reflect the subtle relationships between the Anglo-Saxons' views of the causes of illness with one central, spiritual landmark: the church. The case studies demonstrate how a significant number of charms use liturgical and public locations to disseminate spiritual power into the Anglo-Saxon landscape with constant reference to the church building.

WIÞ ÆLFADLE

The first text I wish to consider is a charm against elf-sickness from London, BL, Royal 12 D xvii (Storms 1948: 222–32). It is a lengthy text, spanning four folios of Book III of *Bald's Leechbook* (123v-25r) and it provides a series of alternative rituals against elf-disease. Hall has suggested that this series of alternative rituals reflects the Anglo-Saxons' different perspectives of elf-disease: "*ælfe* were not seen as the only possible source of such ailments. Rather, it was

recognised that they were one possibility, requiring distinct cures" (Hall 2005: 205). Karen Jolly claims that this section of the manuscript is organised according to "spiritual and mental ills" (Jolly 1996: 156–7). The entire entry mainly consists of vernacular performative instructions though passages of sacred words in ecclesiastical Latin are also required. Although Jolly states that this part of the manuscript "contains more borrowings from liturgical sources" than the other sections (Jolly 2005: 231), she maintains that these rituals against elf-disease contain "elements of Germanic pre-Christian lore" that "undoubtedly predate Christianity but are nonetheless infused with Christian ritual" (Jolly 1996: 160–1). The performative instructions contain an abundance of liturgical prayers, such as litanies, the Creed and the Paternoster, and they also prescribe specific Masses, such as *Omnibus Sanctis*, *Contra Tribulationem* and *Pro Infirmis* (5–6). These Christian elements are not simply additions to pre-Christian ritual nor are they a combination of the two; they form the very foundations of the entire manuscript entry. The locations mentioned in this charm also highlight the central position of the church in the spiritual landscape.

The first ritual in the *Wiþ Ælfadle* charm does not explicitly mention any location but the requirement of Masses and the liturgical objects of "gehalgodes Cristes mæles ragu and stor" ("a hallowed crucifix and incense", 2) imply that visiting the church building was required. The second alternative ritual uses similar liturgical prayers and it prescribes a series of movements between two locations:

> Gang on þunres æfen, þonne sunne sie on setle sie, þær þu wite elenan standan… Læt stician þær on, gang þe aweg. Gang eft to þonne dæg and niht furþum scade. On þam ilcan uhte gang ærest to ciricean, and þe gesena and Gode þe bebeod… Adelf þa wyrt, læt stician þæt seax þær on. Gang eft swa þu raþost mæge to ciricean, and lege under weofod mid þam seaxe. Læt licgan oþ þæt sunne uppe sie (Storms 1948: 15–16, 18–21, 26–8).
>
> *Go on Thursday evening when the sun is setting to where you know helenium* (elenan) *stands… leave it [a knife] sticking therein and go away. Go again, when day and night first divide (dawn); at that same dawn, go first to church, and cross yourself and offer yourself to God… Dig up the plant; leave the knife sticking in it. Go again as quick as you can to church, and lay it under the altar with the knife. Let it lie until the sun is up* (Jolly 1996: 160–1).

This passage makes it clear that the church plays a central role in this ritual. The times of day it prescribes ("þunres æfen", "þonne dæg and niht furþum scade", "oþ þæt sunne uppe sie") and the action of sticking a knife into a plant

have been seen as evidence of pre-Christian worship (see Jolly 1996: 161). Charles Singer also advocated the view that elf charms were a reflection of the Anglo-Saxons' view of their landscape:

> This theory of disease we shall, for brevity, speak of as the *doctrine of elf-shot*. The Anglo-Saxon tribes placed these malicious elves everywhere, but especially in the wild uncultivated wastes where they loved to shoot at the passer-by (Singer 1919–20: 357).

Despite the fact that the elf charms do not identify these 'uncultivated wastes', it has long been held that these texts evoke a wild landscape fraught with supernatural danger. The apparent spiritual potency of the plants and herbs that they name has also been used to support the idea of pre-Christian practices, thus associating public spaces where the plants are known to grow with native religion:

> There are some associations between these natural features and worship of heathen gods… charms have strings of 'magical' gobbledegook, meaningless syllables, bits of Latin, instructions on ritual actions such as culling herbs at dawn, crossing rivers and keeping silent – anything to enhance the air of mystery and lend authority to the charmer (Cavill 1999: 21, 25).

This view is disputed by M. L. Cameron (1988) and Audrey Meaney (1992), who argue that the potency of plants was seen from a medical perspective rather than from a spiritual one. The association of natural locations with pre-Christian religion does not take into account other sites in the landscape and this charm demonstrates how such modern views of herbal potency have been imposed upon the Anglo-Saxon charms.[4] Given that liturgical prayers accompany its prescriptions for performance at certain times of the day and precede the stabbing of the plant, any potential pre-Christian elements are firmly redefined within the charm. The overriding feature of this text is the clear importance placed on the movement between the two locations of 'where elenan stands' and the church building.

The performer is required to constantly move between the two sites as they transfer the power gained from the offering in the church to the plant through liturgical prayer. Towards the end of the ritual this is made explicit in the physical transfer of the plant with the knife still stuck in it ("lege under weofod mid þam seaxe", 27–8). The site signifies the public space in which the ritual takes place and this public location is transported to the church building. Indeed, the need for speed ("raþost", 27) in the transferral emphasises the importance of obtaining spiritual power from the church. The two locations are synthesised

into one as the plant and knife remain under the altar and in the very heart of the church building. The patient can only receive the treatment against elf-disease after the ritual's sites are combined into one location of divine power. This power is called upon at the beginning of the ritual by visiting the church, it is transferred from there to public space with the recital of liturgical prayers, it becomes the centre of the entire ritual as another site is physically moved to the church, and finally it is disseminated from the altar to the patient.

The third alternative ritual for elf-sickness also highlights the importance of the church building. It opens with an instruction to "lege under weofod þas wyrte, læt gesingan ofer VIIII mæssan" ("lay these herbs under the altar, have nine Masses sung over them", 36–7) and thus immediately situates the ritual inside the church building. No other location is identified in the text and the hallowed herbs are transferred from this site to the patient. Liturgical objects such as holy water ("haliges wæteres", 39–40) and incense ("stor", 41) are required for the treatment beyond the church and a reverent sign of the cross ("georne þone man gesena", 44) accompanies the procedure. Thomas Hill has noted that the marking of the cross on the body of the Christian created a site of religious power:

> the Cross is perceived as a centre which defines the spatial dimensions of the world... The larger implications of the use of the theme of the cosmological Cross in this context, however, concern what one might call the sacralization of space (Hill 1978: 488, 490).

The liturgical objects and the signing of the cross signify liturgical power beyond the church building and emphasise the transferance of power to public space. In a similar way to the previous ritual, this prescription also places significant emphasis on the location of the church as the source of the ritual's power.

The final alternative ritual for elf-sickness in the manuscript entry does not explicitly identify any location yet the church is once more the centre of the action. It opens with different ways of diagnosing the sickness according to whether the patient is a male or female. Sacred words are then prescribed after the symptoms of the illness have been outlined. The first section of words is to be written on an unspecified object and composed in Latin so that the language of the Church is used in a ritual setting beyond the church building. These Latin words quote Scripture ("rex regnum et dominus dominantium", 63), the Mass ("Sanctus. Sanctus. Sanctus. dominus deus Sabooth", 65) and invoke Saint Veronica ("beronice", 64). There is no instruction stating what is yet to be done with this writing and the second section of sacred words immediately follows. These words are to be sung in Latin and they are very similar to exorcism formulae found in eleventh-century benedictionals and pontificals, such as

the *Benedictional of Robert* (see Wilson 1903: 117), as they include the laying on of hands ("per inpositionem", 68–9) and the expulsion of illness ("expelle a famulo tuo N", 69). The same formula is also found in a later section of sacred words that are also to be sung and here the illness is identified as a demonic force: "per inpositionem… expelle diabolum a famulo tuo N" (84–6).[5] The exorcism formulae are a consistent feature of charms against elves (see Hall 2005: 201) and these charms reveal an effort to disseminate liturgical practices to the wider community rather than providing evidence of pre-Christian rituals.

The inscription of words from Scripture and the Mass and the singing of the liturgical rite of exorcism in ecclesiastical language dominate this alternative ritual for elf-sickness: "it was appropriate to increase the liturgical content in a remedy which was already substantially based on Christian ritual" (Hall 2005: 201). The position of the church building reflects the fundamental Christian nature of the ritual. The entire entry for *Wiþ Ælfadle* in *Bald's Leechbook* reflects serious and elaborate responses to an illness that could only be countered by the most powerful Christian rituals: "[the] liturgical elements, and their complexity attests to the potential seriousness of *ælfādl*" (Hall 2007: 105). When one considers the role of the church building and the use of liturgical prayers and objects beyond the church, it becomes very clear that the seemingly pre-Christian origins of *Wiþ Ælfadle* are an entirely modern reading of the charm as there is "no further evidence for the nature of *ælfe*, or for what clinical conditions *ælfādl* might denote" (Hall 2007: 105). To an Anglo-Saxon performer and audience, it was the church that dominated the spiritual landscape of the charm whether it was physically attended or whether its liturgical expressions were extended beyond the building.

SE HALGA DRÆNC

The second charm I wish to consider also demonstrates a dependence upon the location of the church. This text is from another famous healing book from the eleventh-century manuscript London, BL Harley 585 (fols. 137v-38r) and prescribes a drink against elves (*ælfsidene*) and all other temptations (Storms 1948: 232–35).[6] The section of the manuscript in which this charm occurs "associates the *ælf*-ailments here with diabolical harm… [and] nocturnal assaults by supernatural beings" (Hall 2007: 105). The ritual opens with the writing of Latin words on the liturgical object of a paten. These words contain abbreviated passages from the gospels of *John* 1: 1 ("In principio erat verbum", 3) and *Matthew* 4: 23–5 ("circumibat Jesus totam Galileam docens usque et secuti sunt eum turbae multae", 4–5) and the incipits of Psalm 54 ("Deus in nomine

tuo", 6), Psalm 67 ("Deus misereatur nobis", 7) and Psalm 70 ("Domine deus in adjutorium", 8). The first location is identified following a list of ingredients including a "sester fulne gehalgodes wines" (jug full of consecrated wine). The location is a stream or river and the charm requires that a pure person must take water from this site: "hat unmælne mon gefeccean swigende ongean streame healfne sester yrnendes wæteres" (11–12). The river may be viewed as the site where the "ælfsidene" (1) originated, as Singer and Cavill argued, but it is more likely that the river represents constant change with its "yrnendes wæteres" (12). This is a feature of other Anglo-Saxon charms and the running water of a stream is explicitly connected to change in a charm against miscarriage:

> Þonne heo to þan broce ga þonne ne beseo heo, no ne eft þonne heo þanan go, and þonne ga heo in oþer hus oþer heo ut ofeode, and þær gebyrge metes.
>
> *When she goes to the stream she must not look round, nor again when she goes away from there, and let her go into another house than the one from which she started, and there take food* (Storms 1948: 199, l. 28–30).

The stream represents change and symbolises an internal transformation in the individual. Other Anglo-Saxon charms that use the *Flum Jordan* motif signify a spiritual change in a subject by invoking the site of Christ's baptism in the River Jordan. Indeed, the motif is used in blood-staunching charms as an "identification of the flowing blood with the flowing waters of the river" (Olsan 2004: 75). Given that the water of the river in *Se Halga Drænc* is to be mixed with consecrated wine, the river is associated with Christ's blood. Its water is to be later transferred to the church, further suggesting that the location symbolises baptismal revitalisation and connects different sacraments of the Church.

After the water is obtained, the herbs are placed into it and the Latin writing on the paten is washed into the water before the consecrated wine is added to the drink. The water is sanctified by the words of the gospels and psalms and the Precious Blood, thus demonstrating how the site of the river becomes a site of liturgical power. The combination of the water with the Eucharist and Scripture is highly significant and there occurs a very similar infusion as was seen with the rituals of *Wiþ Ælfadle*. The location is symbolically transferred and synthesised with the two principle components of the Mass; the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The transferral is then completed by the instruction "Ber þon to ciricean" (16). The elaborate ritual for preparing the holy drink reaches its climax in the church building. Three Masses are then sung over the drink, two of which are the same as those prescribed in *Wiþ Ælfadle* and the other for the Blessed Virgin Mary: "læt singan mæssan ofer ane *Omnibus*, oþre *Contra Tribulatione*,

þriddan *Santam Marian*" (16–17). The Masses effectively complete the fusion of the two locations of "yrnendes wæteres" and the "ciricean" so that the location of the river is successfully transferred to the liturgical setting of the church. The liturgy is first brought to the public, symbolic location before this space is transferred to the church. After the Masses are sung, a series of liturgical prayers are prescribed. Five incipits are listed from the Asperges of the Mass ("Miserere mei deus", 19), Psalms 54, 67 and 70 (as before) and Psalm 86 ("Inclina domine", 23) that are all to be sung. The Creed, Gloria, litanies and Paternoster follow these psalms before the final blessing over the drink, in the form of the doxology "In nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti sit benedictum" (26–7). The drink is then to be given to the patient to counter the *ælfsidene* and all other evils.

The two locations mentioned in this charm reflect similar uses of public and liturgical space as is seen in *Wiþ Ælfadle*. The synthesis of public space with religious setting highlights how the Anglo-Saxons focused the charms around the church building. It was the centre of the ritual action and when performances were carried out beyond its grounds, the church was very much present in the use of liturgical objects, sacred words and the Eucharist itself. Rather than providing evidence of the pre-Christian spiritual potency found in public spaces, such as where certain herbs grew or performance at a river, these two case studies demonstrate that any spiritual power associated with a location in the charms is firmly grounded in the Christian landscape.

CONCLUSION

The locations identified in Anglo-Saxon charms reflect the function of these extra-ecclesial rituals. They transmitted Christian power from its focal site and from the liturgy into the wider world for the benefit of the individual and community. The other sites that are identified are not of greater supernatural significance than the church building, as has often been argued. They may have symbolic significance, such as the river's connection to baptism, but there is no explicit evidence of the isolated spiritual nature of these sites. They only obtain religious significance through their constant affiliation with the liturgy and their orientation around the central location of the church building. The needs of the community conditioned the charms and their fundamental purpose was to answer those needs with liturgical power:

> the history of medieval medicine, insofar as it is the history of healing, should look not only to the writings of doctors and diagnosticians, or even

chroniclers and hagiographers, but also to those of the mostly anonymous men and women who contributed to the liturgy and ritual of the church (Paxton 1992: 99).

The Anglo-Saxon charms intended to make liturgical power available to every Christian and their sacred words decoded such power beyond the sacred space of the church. The two case studies that I have discussed provide examples of how locations in the charms revolve around the church building. Even when the church is not explicitly identified, the function of charms in decoding information is dependent upon the site of the church and it reflects how the Anglo-Saxons viewed their environment. The way in which locations are used in the charms supports the view that they actually developed from the liturgy during the late Anglo-Saxon period and presented ritualised, Christian solutions to daily problems. Rather than providing evidence of a continued paganism, the locations of charms reveal an effort to infuse other spaces with liturgical power beyond the church building. With this evidence from the charms, scholarship can move forward in understanding the spirituality of the Anglo-Saxon landscape and move away from the restrictive attempts to uncover pre-Christian religious practices through locations.

APPENDIX: APPEARANCES OF LOCATIONS IN THE VERNACULAR

* = Biblical locations not for charms' performance.
† = No words of power, cannot be held to be a 'charm'.

	Title	Locations	Appears where?	Storms No.
1	Wið Ymbe	'to wuda', 'eþeles'	Sacred words	1
2	Wiþ Færstice	'þone hlæw'	Sacred words	2
3	Wiþ Wennum	'þan nihgan berhge'	Sacred words	4
4	Wiþ Blæce	'yrnende wæter', 'to huse'	Instructions	6
5	Æcerbot	'on feower healfa þæs landes', 'to circean', 'to ðan weofode', 'þas wæstmas'	Both	8
6	Nigon Wyrta Galdor	'on hus', 'ea rinnende', 'weoda', 'sæs'	Sacred words	9

7	Wiþ Misbyrde	'birgenne', 'to hyre halforde on reste', 'to cyrican', 'þn weofode', 'yrnendum wætere', 'þan broce', 'in oþer hus'	Instructions	10
8	Wiþ Þeofþe	'on feower healfe þæs huses and æne on middan'	Instructions	11A
9	Wiþ Þeofþe	'on feower healfa þæs huses and æne on middan'	Instructions	11B
*10	Wiþ Þeofþe	'Bethlem hattæ seo burh'	Sacred words	13
*11	Wiþ Þeofþe	'Bæðleem hatte seo buruh'	Sacred words	14
12	Wiþ Þeofþe	'ham', 'foldan', 'husa'	Sacred words	15
13	Sið Galdor	'wind wereþum', 'wega Serafhin'	Sacred words	16
14	Wiþ Ælfadle	'þær þu wite elenan standan', 'to ciricean', 'under weofod', 'þæt hus geond'	Instructions	17
15	Se Halga Drænc	'streame', 'yrnendes wæteres', 'to ciricean'	Instructions	18
†16	Wiþ Ælfcynne	'under weofod'	Instructions	20
†17	Wiþ Wennum	'to wylle þe riht east yrne'	Instructions	21
†18	Wiþ Swina	'on fald', 'on þan dore'	Instructions	24
19	Wiþ Deofle	'þær inne þær se seoca man inne sie'	Instructions	28
20	Wiþ Leodrunan	'under weofod'	Instructions	32
21	Wiþ Lenctenadle	'ne ga he in' (i.e. inside the house)	Instructions	33
*22	Gewrit of Heofonum	'on uppan Sanctus Petrus weofud on Rome', 'on cyrcean', 'þinum reste'	Instructions	34
*23	Wiþ Utsihte	'to Rome'	Instructions	35
24	Yrfe to Bote	'[berene] on þa flore' (Storms interprets the floor of the barn)	Instructions	50
25	Wiþ Oman	'on middan huses flore'	Instructions	66
26	Wiþ Hors Oman	'yrnendum wætere', 'stream'	Instructions	67
*27	Wiþ Nædran Bite	'of neorxna wonge'	Instructions	81
28	Columcille Circul	'on middam þam ymbhagan'	Instructions	85

NOTES

¹ For a discussion of how the *Æcerbot* charm served this purpose, see Arthur 2013.

² On the proper translation of 'wiccan' see Crawford 1963.

³ It is also worth noting that this is one of the three charms that do not make any explicit reference to the church or the liturgy.

⁴ W. Horn (1973), Linda Voigts (1979), G. Noll (1982) and Maria D'Aronco (1988) have highlighted the likelihood of such herbs being grown in monastic gardens, suggesting that public spaces containing herbs with spiritual potency were in fact monastic sites.

⁵ For a discussion of this Latin formula and its relation to elf-sickness, see Hall 2005: 204–5.

⁶ For a discussion of the etymology of *ælfsidene*, see Hall 2007: 119–22.

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About the Author

Ciaran Arthur is currently doing an AHRC awarded PhD in Anglo-Saxon charms and liturgy. He is interested in how the 'charms' have been presented as evidence of a pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon past and how their studies reveal more about early 20th century historiographical agendas. He completed his BA Hons in English and Philosophy and his MA in Medieval Studies at Queen's University Belfast. He is working as an Assistant lecturer at the University of Kent, Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies. E-mail: ca287@kent.ac.uk

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