

A photograph of a medieval cityscape at night, featuring large stone arches and ruins illuminated by a bright light source, possibly the moon, in a dark sky.

MEDIEVAL CITYSCAPES TODAY

Catherine A. M. Clarke

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For Thomas, a fellow explorer

Preface

This book uses new research to investigate the scholarly understanding, heritage management, and public interpretation of medieval cityscapes today. Drawing on two contrasting central case studies, it asks questions about approaches to medieval cityscapes in very different forms and contexts: where rich material survivals are still present in the urban landscape, associated with an established culture of heritage tourism; and where the medieval urban environment is absent or invisible today. What research methods can scholars use to explore the medieval cityscape, in its varying forms? And what tools and techniques can enable us to engage wider communities with medieval cityscapes today?

Emerging technologies and expanding digital possibilities make these questions particularly timely and urgent today. New immersive technologies, augmented reality, and virtual historic environments are collapsing the established models and discourses of heritage research and practice, challenging us to think about place and the past in new ways. Where scholars and practitioners have relied on categories such as those of “tangible” and “intangible” heritage, new technologies instead posit an incipient, hybrid realm which merges the material, cultural, and imagined. What constitutes the medieval cityscape today? Is it a material phenomenon or can it be a virtual world? Is it a space of history, reality, or conceptual play? This book takes new technologies as a provocation to ask fundamental questions about how we

should now understand and define historic environments in a digital age.

As well as confronting the implications of digital tools and technologies, this book also examines creative practice as a mode both for public interpretation, and for scholarly inquiry and exploration. The case studies at the core of this volume incorporate experimental, creative initiatives alongside traditional scholarly research methods in their engagement with medieval urban environments. How can projects such as a civic art commission, or development of a computer game enhance public understanding of the medieval cityscape today? And how can these approaches enlarge academic practice and prompt new questions or insights?

The mission of the “Past Imperfect” series ideally supports the aims of this study. *Medieval Cityscapes Today* addresses scholars across a range of disciplines—from history to archaeology to heritage science—as well as professionals in the heritage sector, creative practitioners, policy-makers, and others who are responsible for the conservation and development of our urban spaces. It seeks to make research-led provocations and prompts to new thinking and practice across both scholarship and applied heritage management.

Most of all, though, this book seeks to address fellow academics, and to offer a manifesto for the ways in which new—or more flexible, more capacious—research methods and ways of working might allow Humanities scholars to assert more of a stake in contemporary urban life and the formation of our shared public realm. Thinking critically about the ways in which we mutually police the limits of our disciplines and authority—and the ways in which we could challenge these boundaries—potentially opens up new spaces for scholars from a wide range of subject backgrounds to make interventions in the management and interpretation of historic urban environments today.

Acknowledgements

This book builds on collaborative research funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council. The team for “Mapping Medieval Chester” (2008–2009) included Keith Lilley (Queen’s University Belfast) and Helen Fulton (now University of Bristol) as Co-Investigators, with Mark Faulkner (Trinity College Dublin) as Post-Doctoral Researcher. The project “Discover Medieval Chester” also involved Keith Lilley, and a team at the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, led by Susan Hughes. “City Witness: Place and Perspective in Medieval Swansea” included Keith Lilley and Paul Vetch (then Department of Digital Humanities, King’s College London) as Co-Investigators, and Gareth Dean and Harriett Webster as Post-Doctoral Researchers.

Moving on from these projects, the research for this book has benefited from the questions, comments, and ideas of many colleagues, including participants at the Medieval Research Seminar in the Faculty of English Language and Literature, University of Oxford and the MEMORI medieval research seminar at Cardiff University. Invitations to give the keynote lecture at the 2014 Digital Heritage conference (University of York), the 2016 Denys Hay Lecture (University of Edinburgh) and a plenary lecture at the 2016 “Lost and Transformed Cities: A Digital Perspective” conference (Lisbon) also all gave me opportunities to develop research for this book and to learn from other current work in the field.

I would also like to offer personal thanks to Leonie Hicks, John McGavin, and, especially, Keith Lilley, for their generous help and advice. Finally, I wish to thank my former colleagues in the Department of English, University of Southampton, where I researched and completed this book: in gratitude for all your support, inspiration, and friendship.

Notes

While the title of this book is very broad, I have chosen to focus on case-study towns and cities in western Europe, and mostly in the United Kingdom. This choice reflects my own scholarly interests, expertise, and personal experience: I acknowledge the limits of my focus here and that a different geographical and cultural range would bring varying issues and questions into the foreground. Nonetheless, I hope my arguments and insights here apply to many towns and cities, especially across Europe, and that they can contribute to wider debates about heritage in a global context today.

In order to keep footnotes to a minimum, subsequent citations of sources are usually referenced in brackets in the main text. Key background sources and “Further Reading” are given at the end of the book.

Rouen: Introduction

I'm standing high on the Cathedral of Notre Dame, looking down over the medieval cityscape of Rouen, Normandy. It is late May, 1431: trees blossom in gardens, the fields across the Seine are lush and green, ships cluster either side of the Pont Mathilde, where cargo is hauled up the riverbanks. I can see the Abbey of Saint Ouen, caged in wooden scaffolding, where the tower and nave are under construction. To the north, I see the squat, round towers of Rouen Castle, with the crenellations of the city wall behind them; towards the west, near the river, the English are hard at work on their new fortress—later to be known as the Vieux Palais. Smoke drifts up from handsome, four-storey timbered houses in the Rue Grand-Pont, where a small crowd has gathered to watch a group of masked entertainers perform in the street. I can hear the chatter of children playing in the Cour d'Albane cloister below me, bells chiming in the distance, the ring of masons' tools as they work the new Gothic arches at the top of the Saint Romain tower.

Taking in this panoramic view of the city, I recall the startling description of Rouen in the twelfth-century *Ecclesiastical History* of Orderic Vitalis. After a local revolt against Robert, Duke of Normandy, in 1090, the rebel leader Conan is taken to the top of the ducal tower by Robert's brother Henry (the future Henry I of England), to be shown the wealth and beauty of the city which he has coveted.

Considera Conane, quam pulchram tibi conatus es subicere. En ad meridiem delectabile parcum patet oculis tuis; et sal-tuosa regio siluestribus abundans feris. Ecce Sequana pis-cosum flumen Rotomagensem murum allambit; nauesque pluribus mercimoniis refertas huc cotidie deuehit. En ex alia parte ciuitas populosa minibus sacrisque templis et urbanis edibus speciose; cui iure a priscis temporibus subiacet Nor-mannia tota.

Regard, Conan, the beauty of the country you tried to sub-ordinate. See to the south before your eyes lies a delightful park, wooded and well-stocked with beasts of the chase. See how the river Seine, full of fishes, laps the wall of Rouen and daily brings in ships laden with merchandise of many kinds. See on the other side the fair and populous city, with its ramparts and churches and town buildings, which has rightly been the capital of Normandy from the earliest days.¹

Henry's speech taunts Conan with the conventions of medi-eval urban encomium (praise of a city), before the traitor is flung from the tower to his death. Orderic's text presents the fantasy of a city fully seen, comprehended, enjoyed, and possessed: the Latin itself puns on the seductive, dangerous imaginative slippage between beholding and holding—rul-ing—the delightful landscape laid out below ("*tibi conatus es subicere*" / "*subiacet Normannia tota*"). For modern readers, this fantasized version of the city in its totality must also recall Michel De Certeau's seminal discussion of the view over New York from the World Trade Center towers and the "erot-ics of knowledge" which he associates with this elevated per-spective on the urban landscape. De Certeau reflects on "this pleasure of 'seeing the whole', of looking down on, totalizing the most immoderate of human texts"—the city itself—which simultaneously disconnects and distances the viewer from the "ordinary practitioners of the city" who make its multiple, intersecting, illegible meanings, deep in the streets below.²

So, how have I come to be looking down on the city-scape of Rouen on May 30, 1431? I am visiting the spec-tacular "Rouen 1431" 360° Panorama, by the artist Yade-gar Asisi, housed in a purpose-built tower on the right



Figure 1. Rouen 1431 panorama.
Photo by Thomas Boivin © Asisi.

bank of the River Seine in the modern city. Developed from sketches and drawings of the medieval city, as well as historical models and documentary evidence, the Panorama is built from a composite of photography (including costumed re-enactors) and computer-generated imagery, offering a hyper-real, immersive view of the late-medieval landscape. Viewed from a fifteen-metre-high platform, changing lighting creates a cycle from day to night, and sound-effects evoke the aural landscape of the medieval city.

The Panorama offers a fantasy, an impossible view of Gothic Rouen, experienced by 170,000 visitors in its opening year. It also plays a major role in current regeneration of this area of the city's right bank—away from the established heritage tourism attractions, in a zone characterized by post-industrial warehouses and hangars—and regional development: the city's medieval past at the forefront of local political agendas to “boldly combine heritage and modernity.”³ But the Panorama offers something other than a straightforward reconstruction of the medieval city: it pres-

ents a view which was always impossible—one which never existed. I stand looking down on Rouen, 1431, from the top of the cathedral's Butter Tower—not built until the sixteenth century. In the streets below me, moments from across the city's year are conflated into a single day. I can see the Saint Roman Privilege and Ascension Day procession in the Place de le Calende, and Mystery Play performers in the streets, while, at the corner of the derelict Saint Herbland Church, I glimpse a wooden cart carrying a young woman—Joan of Arc—to the stake.

In the book which accompanies "Rouen 1431," Asisi reflects on the ways in which his installation participates in the tradition of the panorama, which emerged as a popular form of artwork and visitor experience in later eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Europe. These historical panoramas—often depicting city views—were continuous 360°-representations, hung in specially-constructed rotundas similar to the present-day version built by Asisi. The huge dimensions of these works, together with their manipulation of perspective, produced the illusion of being transported to a new place, presenting paying visitors with landscape—and especially cityscape—as a carefully-managed and highly-crafted spectacle (see Further Reading at the end of this book). Before the technology of panoramas, this pleasure of commanding the full view of a landscape was expressed in the early modern tradition of "long views" and "prospect views," such as the hugely popular depictions of English towns and cities published by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck in the 1730s and 40s.

Across their various technologies, the formal tropes of these prospect and panorama views served to reinforce the "cityscape" as an aesthetic ideal, achieved through an idealized—often fantasized—perspective, and called into a coherent, unified, pleasing whole. The term "cityscape" is a relative latecomer to the vocabulary of place and space, first appearing in print as a playful correlate to (rural) "landscape" in 1856 (Oxford English Dictionary). But, as this first citation illustrates, its formation plays upon the currency of "landscape" in English usage from at least 1605. A borrow-

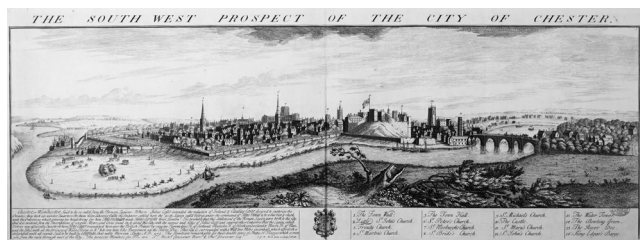


Figure 2. Nathaniel Buck, SW prospect of the City of Chester, 1728 (British Library Maps K.Top.9.7.b), by permission of the British Library

ing from the Dutch *landschap*—a technical term for natural scenery in a painting—“landscape” is thus fundamentally an aesthetic construct, framed by cultural conventions, values, and desires. These carry over into its urban analogue: the “cityscape,” every bit as much, is a product of aesthetic tropes and received representational practices or ways of seeing. Representation of a cityscape always involves some sleight of hand or elision; its perception demands some willing complicity on the part of the viewer. The idea of “cityscape” forges an aesthetic whole out of the disparate, fragmentary, accidental elements of the built urban environment, replacing rupture, dissonance, and contradiction with unity and coherence. It obstructs our attention to the collisions, frictions, and incongruities in the material environment, as well as to the contested and fractured nature of the city as a fraught nexus of multiple practised social spaces. But the “cityscape” endures as a compelling trope; one, for example, that continues to motivate and frame the tourist gaze and inform the marketing of urban heritage today. It’s in the title of this book, too, and while I use it throughout my discussion as a near synonym for “urban environment” or “geographical space of the city,” it carries with it cultural and aesthetic connotations to which I will return in the closing “Afterword.” For now, surveying the spectacular cityscape of Rouen, 1431, in

Asisi's Panorama, I know that I need to take myself down into the streets below.

I walk into Rouen city centre with my family and explore. We stroll around the cathedral—looking upwards from ground level, this time—and take photographs of the Gros Horloge astronomical clock. We browse shops in the medieval streets, and buy a postcard of a Monet painting of the Notre Dame towers. My five-year-old daughter plays Pokemon Go, encountering the city through the screen of a phone. We sit outside a café and eat crêpes, while soldiers carrying automatic weapons walk by amongst the tourists: this is summer 2016 and a priest has been murdered by terrorists in a nearby church. I think of Rouen in 1431 or 1090, with soldiers on the streets and tension in the air. This is the medieval cityscape today: a series of appositions, frictions, and dialogues which bring the historic city into focus in shifting and sometimes surprising ways within the modern urban environment. As Sarah Salih has recently noted, seeing the medieval city around us is not a calculated and predictable process of empirical recovery. Instead, it often requires “effort, imagination, luck, or knowledge,” contingent on the moment and on individual perspective, not fixed or replicable.⁴

My experiences in Rouen highlight the complexities and challenges inherent in understanding what constitutes the medieval cityscape today. Perhaps most obviously, the medieval cityscape comprises the historic built environment and the material heritage of the Middle Ages in surviving buildings and architectural fragments, as well as in features of street pattern and urban layout. David Lowenthal has commented on the “supreme merit of tangible remains,” inherent in “the ready access they afford to the past’s ubiquitous traces,” adding that:

Relics and remnants viewable by all offer unmediated impressions free to any passer-by. Seeing history on the ground is less self-conscious than reading about it: texts require both an author and out deliberate engagement, whereas relics can come to us seemingly unguided and without conscious effort.⁵

Yet Lowenthal's optimism about ubiquity and accessibility jars with Salih's observations on the often elusive, fugitive nature of the medieval cityscape—sometimes evading view, sometimes slipping into focus. And even here, in the case of the city's tangible heritage, the medieval is mediated through ongoing processes of conservation, reconstruction, imitation, and adaptation. As always, we view the Middle Ages through the accretions, interventions, and responses of later centuries, as the material medieval cityscape continues to evolve and change. Alongside the tangible survivals of stones and timber, intangible heritage also plays an important role in shaping place and identity. In relation to the medieval cityscape, we might consider the significance of traditional practices which survive from the Middle Ages, local stories, memories, the mythologies encoded in street names, civic festivals, and religious rituals. The interplay between tangible and intangible heritage in historic environments is now well recognized and understood by scholars, heritage practitioners, and conservation bodies.

But, today, the medieval cityscape must also be understood in new terms, with radical implications for how we think about place, heritage, and modes of encounter with the past and with historic environments. Increasingly, the medieval cityscape is becoming virtual or digital: not constrained or limited by the vagaries of material survival or embodied performance in the physical environment. As our cities become more complex, hybrid spaces, in which material and digital worlds overlay and intersect, so the medieval cityscape is being re-conceptualized as a space composed of both physical and virtual content. Digital technologies and media are producing new kinds of augmented or hybrid medieval cityscape, using tools such as 3D visualizations, interactive applications, map overlays, gaming, and geo-location data to forge connections between present-day urban environments and their antecedents, and to situate individuals in immersive and engaging historic landscapes. These technological changes are fundamentally transforming the ways in which we approach questions of research, conservation, and inter-

pretation, offering new methodologies for recuperating lost heritage, for mediating between empirical, evidence-based scholarship and more speculative versions of the past, and for enabling richer varieties of visitor experience. In the context of these emergent, rapidly-developing digital technologies, we can understand the augmented or hybrid medieval cityscape today as an incipient space: just drawing into focus as a new realm of experience and critical inquiry.

The space of possibility opened up by these developing technologies is also mirrored in current scholarly approaches to the medieval city. Where, for example, the “Rouen 1431” Panorama uses computer-generated imagery alongside photography of surviving monuments to produce its composite version of the medieval city, it also deliberately exceeds the limitations of partial historical evidence—and even the restrictions of factual history—to present suggestive juxtapositions, catalyze affective engagement, and provoke critical questions. Similarly, in much current research on the medieval city, we can see an increasingly self-conscious imbrication of empirical scholarship and creative re-imagining, and experimentation with a wider variety of tools and idioms for academic engagement with the past. Such approaches expand the roles of researchers, allowing room for creative practice alongside empirical analysis. They resonate with current debates, often led by medievalist scholars, which seek to interrogate, challenge, and renew modes of scholarship in the Humanities, and to explore alternative critical registers and sites of inquiry. Like viewing fifteenth-century Rouen from the top of a tower which didn’t yet exist, these experimental modes play with new vantage-points and different ways of seeing, opening up new perspectives on the medieval cityscape and fresh critical conversations.

This book will draw on my own background working with medieval cityscapes today, bringing together research with heritage interpretation practice and participation in urban conservation and regeneration initiatives. In particular, the book is grounded on two major projects—both interdisciplinary and collaborative—which I have led over the past

decade, in the UK cities of Chester (north-west England) and Swansea (south Wales). "Mapping Medieval Chester: Place and Identity in an English Borderland City, c.1200-1500" (www.medievalchester.ac.uk) explored a variety of textual and cartographic "mappings" of this medieval city, to explore how the urban space was understood and represented differently by individuals and communities from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The project produced a new interactive digital atlas of Chester, ca. 1500, using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) technology, linked to textual "mappings" of the city in Latin (*De Laude Cestrie* by the monk Lucian, ca. 1200, as well as the poem to Chester in Higden's *Polychronicon*), English (Henry Bradshaw's *Life of St. Werburge*, printed in 1521), and Welsh (various poems from manuscript sources, including satire and invective directed against the city as a site of colonialist control, as well as devotional poetry addressed to the relics of the cross at St. John's Church). This research then formed the basis for a long-term partnership with Cheshire West and Chester Council (local government), and especially the city's Grosvenor Museum. Collaborative activities, shaped by the new research into the medieval city, included development of a permanent public art installation at St. John's Church (and regeneration of the area around the site), a major museum exhibition and public activities, an interactive city tour website, and consultation on issues from public realm policy and wayfinding strategy to conservation, planning, and heritage interpretation (<http://discover.medievalchester.ac.uk>). The second core project which underpins this book is focused on Swansea, a post-industrial port city on the south Wales coast; in the Middle Ages the administrative centre of the Anglo-Norman colonial marcher lordship of Gower. "City Witness: Place and Perspective in Medieval Swansea" (www.medievalswansea.ac.uk) took as its starting point a story which has attracted attention from several medieval historians: the accounts of the hanging of the Welsh outlaw William Cragh in 1290 (and his apparently miraculous revival) contained in the canonization proceedings for Thomas Cantilupe, Bishop of Hereford,

preserved in a manuscript in the Vatican Library (shelfmark MS Vat. Lat. 4015). The project produced digital editions and translations of the nine medieval eyewitness statements reporting the events surrounding Cragh's execution, linked to an interactive digital atlas of Swansea ca. 1300 with itinerary maps and 3D sight-line visualizations for each witness. Again, the research in Swansea was intrinsically connected to local urban regeneration and development agendas. In fact, the research was initiated in response to a request from the City and County of Swansea (local government) for support with interpreting Swansea Castle—the only surviving material element of the medieval cityscape—and developing a distinctive identity for the city centre (an economically deprived area targeted for regeneration) as a heritage site. The project involved advising and consulting with the Council and commercial companies, a museum exhibition and public events, and production of a trail around Swansea city centre, with markers set into pedestrian pavement walkways. The project continues to expand and develop, with the creation of a new heritage tourism route (The St. Thomas Way) from Swansea to Hereford Cathedral, inspired by the pilgrimage made by the hanged man, Cragh—together with his would-be executioners—after his miraculous revival.

These projects bridge conventional scholarship and heritage practice, modelling the ways in which research into the historic urban environment can impact on medieval cityscapes today. They also demonstrate the productive kinds of exchange and reciprocal benefit which can emerge from working with practitioners and professionals outside academia, and from working in creative modes, or in contexts driven by specific real-world agendas and pressures. The projects also both deal with the medieval cityscape in its various inter-related forms: from analysis of medieval evidence in order to recover historic places and spatial practices, to engagement with and intervention in the material environment today, to experimentation with virtual (digital) versions of the medieval city in order to test research hypotheses and engage the wider public. Indeed, the "Discover Medie-

val Chester” website, with an interactive layered map of the medieval and modern city, and multi-media tour resources, received a commendation award (New Year Honours, 2014) from the Chester Civic Trust, a body dedicated to safeguarding the heritage of the city’s built environment. This was the first time that a digital initiative (rather than conservation of a physical building, or new building developments within the city) had been recognized by the Trust—a significant marker of the ways in which the medieval cityscape increasingly encompasses both the material and virtual realms.

So, my own work on medieval cityscapes crosses from traditional scholarship on the Middle Ages into heritage interpretation and management, and connects research with applied practice. But my own disciplinary background is in medieval cultural history and, specifically, medieval literary studies. What’s distinctive about a book on “Medieval Cityscapes Today” written by an author with a training in literary history and textual studies rather than, for example, a specialist in historical geography, or an archaeologist, or a heritage scientist? While my work, and this book’s discussions, touch on all of these areas, I cannot claim primary expertise in these disciplines. Instead, my approach to the medieval cityscape is informed by the techniques of close reading and analysis I learned as the core skills of my scholarly specialism, and the attention to story-telling, representation, and reception which I seek to bring to any kind of cultural product. I am interested in the city as a locus of multi-layered stories, and as a site where meanings and identities are constantly produced and negotiated. My interest in the medieval cityscape begins as much with reading as with material culture: from the Vatican manuscript recording William Cragh’s execution, with its strange textual geographies and half-remembered itineraries, to a Middle English poem which (somewhat preposterously) compares a fire in Chester to the sack of Troy or the fall of Rome. These imagined versions of the medieval city are every bit as significant as its physical realities in the Middle Ages, or its present-day material and virtual landscapes. For some readers, my approach may

suggest the influence of literary “Psychogeography” and the work of writers such as Will Self, Iain Sinclair, or Peter Ackroyd (see Further Reading). While this is not an approach I have consciously attempted to adopt, I find their model of place as a way into stories both public and personal (and sometimes autobiographical) attractive and compelling. Lastly, I am also interested in how post-medieval sources, from the early modern period onwards, negotiate questions of how to engage with, conserve or recuperate, and make sense of medieval history and its material survivals in the urban landscape. Thus, I situate our current concerns about the constitution, conservation, and curation of medieval cityscapes within a longer-view context of critical and practical discourses on the subject.

This book is structured into two sections, focusing on the complementary and contrasting case-study cities of Chester and Swansea, and drawing on my research and heritage management work in these locations. Each section is built around a series of itineraries through the cityscape, from a stroll through Chester to St. John’s Church (following in the footsteps of Henry James and the medieval monk Lucian), to the medieval witness routes and the modern pavement marker trail—as well as a walk down the High Street taken by Dylan Thomas, the famous local poet—in Swansea. The paired case studies of Chester and Swansea allow interrogation of some shared themes and questions across the two locations, including their particular characteristics as borderland cities and sites of complex multi-lingual, multi-ethnic cultures in the Middle Ages. But, more emphatically, the two cities offer a striking contrast which allows investigation of medieval cityscapes today in radically different forms. Chester is well established as a tourist destination (though more usually marketed for its Roman, rather than medieval, heritage), and boasts impressive material survivals from the Middle Ages, including its churches and cathedral, the intact circuit of its city walls, and vernacular architecture (though, as we shall see, many of these buildings have been subject to heavy restoration and later adaptation). For well over a cen-

ture, visitors have travelled from across the world to experience the city's picturesque medieval cityscape and, more recently, to share in modern revivals of its intangible medieval heritage, such as the five-yearly staging of the Chester Mystery Play cycle or the annual Minstrels' Court festival of musicians. The medieval cityscape of Swansea, by contrast, is almost invisible today, due to wartime bombing and later urban re-development. Swansea Castle survives as the only immediately-recognizable fragment of medieval material heritage in the urban environment, now cast adrift in a post-war street layout and a city centre scoured of most of its historic architecture and tangible relationship to the past. While the nearby Gower Peninsula—a government-designated “Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty”—preserves a still-visible medieval landscape in its churches, villages (including traces of lost settlements), and field patterns, the urban environment of Swansea suppresses and denies its rich medieval past. In their contrasting cityscapes, Chester and Swansea present emphatically different challenges and opportunities for academic research into the medieval urban environment, and for heritage management and interpretation practice.

One city offers a rich, tangible medieval cityscape which demands careful conservation and curation for visitors and local communities. The other raises questions about how we—whether as scholars or heritage practitioners—might begin to engage with an absent historic cityscape and the challenges of mediating between the modern city and its lost antecedents. The case study of medieval Swansea—like the Rouen Panorama, among the post-industrial warehouses on the River Seine—also opens up questions about the relationships between heritage interpretation or exploitation, economic and social need, and urban regeneration and development. In what ways can scholars of the medieval past participate in the management and renewal of cities—including those facing crises of economics or identity—today?

In the spirit of this “Past Imperfect” series, this book attempts to break down divides between the medieval and modern, between disciplinary boundaries, and between typ-

ical notions of the distinction between “research” and “creative practice.” It seeks to offer provocations and challenges to conventional conceptualizations of scholarship and its limits. Its discussion of imbricated research and applied practice in relation to medieval cityscapes today has wider-reaching implications as a manifesto for thinking in new ways about the public value of Humanities research, and the ways in which a range of scholarly disciplines might claim a stake in the production of the public realm in our towns and cities. But the book also acknowledges the challenges, compromises, and risks involved when traditional, established methods of scholarly research are enlarged to accommodate new kinds of creative, collaborative, and public-facing practice.

The title of Chapter 1, “The Medieval City and Other Monsters,” recalls Michael Camille’s description of medieval sites as “continually being reinterpreted, reconstructed, and interrupted by new monsters of our own making,”⁶ but takes its cue most immediately from the epigraph to an eighteenth-century Chester text. This chapter, focused on Chester, begins by inviting the reader to join me for a walk through Chester’s streets from the medieval Cathedral of St. Werburgh to the Collegiate Church of St. John, re-tracing and intersecting with fragments of other itineraries and accounts of the city reaching back to the Middle Ages. Via its route through the cityscape of Chester, the chapter explores the history of the management and representation of the city’s medieval built heritage, raising questions about perception, conservation, and idioms of scholarly and popular reception. The chapter then focuses on the public art project at the city’s medieval St. John’s ruins, on which I collaborated as part of the “Discover Medieval Chester” project, funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council. I approach the art project in the context of a long tradition of discussions of heritage conservation in Chester, drawing particularly on an eighteenth-century pamphlet, which, through its Ovidian epigraph, raises the perennial challenge of “restoring ancient forms” without creating “new monsters.” The chapter opens out into a broader discussion of questions of authority, legit-

imacy, and licence in historical scholarship, and the ways in which practice-led or creative research problematizes conventional disciplines and categories. The chapter concludes with a vision of engaged research which defies the threat of “monsters” and which embraces new forms of playful, experimental exchange and collaboration, opening up richer possibilities for academics to engage and intervene in historic cityscapes today.

Chapter 2 focuses on the city of Swansea, beginning with Dylan Thomas as he walks through the “havoc’d” centre of the bombed-out town on a freezing February day, encountering the ghosts of “vanished buildings” in a post-war landscape of “snow and ruin.” Titled “Seeing the Invisible City: Spatial Encounters in Medieval Swansea,” the chapter asks questions about how we might begin to recover and interpret lost or absent medieval cityscapes, and models possible approaches through the digital and material strategies which formed elements of the “City Witness” research project. The chapter examines the nine witness depositions collected in the early thirteenth-century MS Vat. Lat. 4015, informed by GIS mapping and reconstruction of the witnesses’ itineraries and movements within medieval Swansea. This analysis offers new insights into the physical landscape of the medieval town, but also calls attention to the always-invisible social and cultural geographies which operated within the urban environment, and which shaped and constrained the spatial practices of individuals from different cultural and ethnic communities. The chapter explores the production of a pavement (sidewalk) marker trail, linked to digital resources and virtual reconstructions of the medieval town, as a way of engaging modern communities and visitors with the city’s unseen medieval history. It raises questions about conventional paradigms in heritage interpretation practice, which rely on physical “relics” or material continuities between past and present as a conduit into history, suggesting instead that experiences of rupture, dislocation, and disorientation can provide an equally powerful impetus to imaginative engagement with the past. Through its discussion of medie-

val sources and modern responses, the chapter presents and interrogates a series of inter-linked, multi-layered invisible cityscapes: from the complex cultural and social geographies of the town in the Middle Ages, to the landscapes of memory and recollection conjured by Dylan Thomas and the medieval witnesses, to the absent medieval cityscape of Swansea today, juxtaposed with the virtual visualizations of the medieval town on the digital tour website. The chapter also explores other invisible geographies which haunt the modern city, from the grand re-development proposals for Swansea after the Blitz—which were never realized—to counter-factual descriptions of the city which imagine the results of different approaches to conservation and urban planning in the post-war period. In the cityscape today, past and present, real and imagined, fact and fiction collide, pull against each other and overlay in surprising, uncomfortable and endlessly suggestive ways.

A short Afterword once again begins with autobiography, and a day filming for a television documentary in Winchester (summer 2017). It returns critically to the vexed ideal of “cityscape,” and the challenges of presenting a fragmentary, multi-layered historic environment in a coherent and engaging way via broadcast media. Bringing together primary evidence, individual experience, story-telling, and current theories of place and temporality, this section foregrounds the fundamental roles of time and desire in our engagements with the historic urban environment.

Notes

¹ *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis IV*, ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 224; this translation from Leonie V. Hicks, “Through the City Streets: Movement and Space in Rouen as Seen by the Norman Chroniclers,” in *Society and Culture in Medieval Rouen, 911–1300*, ed. Leonie Hicks and Elma Brenner (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 125–49 at 136–37.

² Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 92–93.

³ Frédéric Sanchev, President of Métropole Rouen Normandie, in *Rouen 1431: Yadegar Asisi 360° Panorama* (Berlin: Asisi Editions, 2016), 5.

⁴ Sarah Salih, 'In/visible Medieval/isms', *Studies in Medievalism* 25 (2016): 53-69 at 53.

⁵ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 393.

⁶ Camille is referring here specifically to medieval cathedrals. Michael Camille, *The Gargoyles of Notre-Dame: Medievalism and the Monsters of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), xi.