

THE ROMAN CITY AND ITS PERIPHERY

FROM ROME TO GAUL



PENELOPE J. GOODMAN

THE ROMAN CITY AND ITS PERIPHERY

Why did Roman cities develop an urban periphery? How was that space used, and how was it understood by contemporaries?

The Roman City and its Periphery explores the issue of periurban development outside the cities of the Roman world: the first time the issue has been treated in a comprehensive volume. Through a wide range of case studies, ranging from Rome itself to provincial cities across the western part of the empire, Penny Goodman explores contemporary views of periurban development, and compares them with the reality of archaeological remains. At the core of the work is a detailed case study of the cities of Roman Gaul, from well-known major cities such as Arles to small towns like Argentomagus, and from the Roman conquest to the end of antiquity.

This extensive study reveals that the development of an urban periphery was a widespread and characteristic feature of Roman cities everywhere, and shows that it could function as an important part of the urban fabric – a far cry from the low-grade artisanal suburbs of the medieval and early modern world. *The Roman City and its Periphery* shows the contributions which an understanding of periurban space can make to debates concerning the character of a Roman city, its relationship with the countryside, and the relationship of local elites with the power that was Rome.

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Penelope J. Goodman

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PREFACE

This book began life as a D.Phil. thesis, accepted by the University of Oxford in 2002. Particular thanks, then, are of course owed to the supervisors of that thesis: Nicholas Purcell, and, in its early stages, the late John Lloyd. The debt to both is immeasurable, on a personal and an academic level. I am also immensely grateful to my examiners, Andrew Wilson and Greg Woolf, whose constructive criticisms have contributed much to the improvements made since submission. Like Nicholas Purcell, both have continued to offer generous support, advice, encouragement and scholarly guidance since my graduation. I, and the book, am the better for it.

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While revising the thesis for publication, my academic experience has been greatly extended by teaching positions at the Universities of Warwick, Reading, and Queen's, Belfast. My colleagues in all three institutions have been warmly supportive, but special thanks are due to Simon Swain for his consistent faith in me as both a scholar and a teacher. I am grateful, too, to Barry Cunliffe for offering advice on the publication process, Routledge's anonymous reader for encouraging and helpful comments on chapter 2, Janet DeLaine for guidance on baths, Marlies Wendowski and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill for sharing information on their unpublished research and Maura Pringle for her unparalleled professionalism as a map-drawer.

PREFACE

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AJAH:</i>	American Journal of Ancient History
<i>AnnÉp:</i>	L'Année Épigraphique
<i>ANRW:</i>	Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt
<i>ArchAqui:</i>	Archéologie en Aquitaine
<i>ArchClass:</i>	Archeologica Classica
<i>ASHAL:</i>	Annuaire de la Société d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de la Lorraine
<i>AttiPontAcc:</i>	Atti della Pontificia Accademia romana di archeologia
<i>BCAR:</i>	Bullettino della Commissione Archeologia Comunale di Roma
<i>BCPdC:</i>	Bulletin de la Commission Départementale d'Histoire et d'Archéologie du Pas de Calais
<i>BEAN:</i>	Bulletin de l'École Antique de Nîmes
<i>BMML:</i>	Bulletin des Musées et Monuments Lyonnais
<i>BMSAB:</i>	Bulletin et Mémoires de la Société Archéologie de Bordeaux
<i>BSAHCM:</i>	Bulletin de Liaison de la Société d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de la Charente-Maritime
<i>BSAS:</i>	Bulletin de la Société Archéologique de Sens
<i>BSAV:</i>	Bulletin de la Société des Amis de Vienne
<i>BTSAP:</i>	Bulletin Trimestriel de la Société des Antiquaires de Picardie
<i>CAG:</i>	Carte Archéologique de la Gaule
<i>CAHB:</i>	Cahiers d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de Berry
<i>CCGG:</i>	Cahiers du Centre G. Glotz
<i>CIL:</i>	Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum
<i>CRAI:</i>	Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres
<i>DossArch:</i>	Dossiers d'Archéologie
<i>JRA:</i>	Journal of Roman Archaeology
<i>JRS:</i>	Journal of Roman Studies
<i>LTUR(S):</i>	Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae(: Suburbium)
<i>MAAR:</i>	Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>MDAIR:</i>	Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Römische Abteilung
<i>MMPiot:</i>	Monuments et Mémoires (Fondation Eugène Piot)
<i>MSAM:</i>	Mémoires de la Société Archéologique du Midi de la France
<i>MSSNAC:</i>	Mémoires de la Société des Sciences Naturelles et Archéologiques de la Creuse
<i>NS:</i>	Notizie degli scavi di antichità
<i>OMRL:</i>	Oudheidkundige Mededelingen uit het Rijksmuseum van Oudheiden te Leiden
<i>PBSR:</i>	Papers of the British School at Rome
<i>PCPS:</i>	Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society
<i>PH:</i>	Provence Historique
<i>RAC:</i>	Revue Archéologique du Centre
<i>RAE:</i>	Revue Archéologique de l'Est et du Centre-Est
<i>RAN:</i>	Revue Archéologique de Narbonnaise
<i>RAO:</i>	Revue Archéologique de l'Ouest
<i>RAP:</i>	Revue Archéologique de Picardie
<i>RCRF:</i>	Rei Cretariae Romanae Fautorum
<i>RdN:</i>	Revue du Nord
<i>RevArch:</i>	Revue Archéologique
<i>RevLyon:</i>	Revue du Lyonnaise
<i>RIC:</i>	The Roman Imperial Coinage
<i>RivIstArch:</i>	Rivista dell'Istituto Nazionale di Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte
<i>RSaintonge:</i>	Revue de la Saintonge et de l'Aunis
<i>TAL:</i>	Travaux d'Archéologie Limousine
<i>TCCG:</i>	Topographie Chrétienne des Cités de la Gaule des origines au milieu du VIIIe siècle.

EXPLORING THE EDGES OF A ROMAN CITY

A Roman city, like a text, a vase or a statue, is an artefact of the society which produced it. Its buildings, its infrastructure and its spatial organisation can therefore give us, as modern observers, an insight into the nature of that society. Working back from the material remains revealed by archaeology, and in the light of other forms of evidence such as art, literature, legal documents or coinage, we can seek to identify the social customs and processes which shaped the character and appearance of the urban fabric.¹ We may observe, for example, the effects of the efforts of the ruling elite to maintain their elevated social status through their use of public buildings, statues and inscriptions to impress and to court popularity.² Similarly, we may detect the desire of craftsmen and small traders to maximise trade in the clustering of shops and workshops along main roads.³ We can also ask how the fabric of the city, once established, might in itself shape the day-to-day lives of its inhabitants.⁴

This book sets out to explore the organisation and use of a particular section of the Roman urban fabric – the urban periphery – as a means of better understanding the nature and workings of Roman urban society. Chapters 2 and 3 will offer a detailed exploration of what constituted the periphery of a Roman city, and how it might be identified. For the purposes of introducing the concept, however, a basic definition of an urban periphery may be offered here. A city's periphery can be taken to mean any occupation on the fringes of a city which is neither fully urban nor fully rural in character.⁵ Although the urban periphery is intimately connected with the city, an observer familiar with Roman urbanism should be able to distinguish it not only from the centre of the city but also from the countryside beyond. Such an observer, of course, could be an ancient inhabitant of the Roman empire or a modern researcher.

To date, the Roman urban periphery has received relatively little attention from scholars. Yet it is clear that the concept of occupation which was neither fully urban nor fully rural did exist in the ancient world. Both literary texts and legal documents, for example, refer to such land-use with a variety of specialised words and phrases. Amongst the most common are the Latin

adjective, '*suburbanus*', the adjectival phrases, '*extra urbem*', '*extra moenia*' and '*extra murum*', and the Greek noun, '*proast(e)ion*' and its related forms. The very use of these terms indicates that something which cannot be defined as either urban or rural is being described, while, as chapter 2 will show, the contexts in which they occur reveal much about ancient perceptions of periurban occupation. Meanwhile, archaeological evidence shows that the organisation of space and the use of land in the urban periphery was indeed different in certain respects from that in the urban centre or the countryside. Burials, for instance, were almost never made in the urban centre, while in the countryside they tended to be widely dispersed. Yet, on the periphery of the city, they were often concentrated into cemetery zones, or lined the edges of the main roads out of the urban centre. Thus, conventions differed between the city, the urban periphery and the countryside. This suggests that the people making the burials considered there to be a real distinction between the three.

It is clear, then, that the urban periphery was a widely recognised and meaningful feature of Roman urbanism in the past. If this was the case, it is of course important for us to examine and understand it, as an essential element in wider explorations of Roman urbanism and Roman urban society. This book offers such an investigation. It asks why periurban development arose at Roman cities; how, why and to what extent it differed from occupation and land-use in the city and in the countryside; what were its distinguishing characteristics; what factors and processes shaped those characteristics; and what it meant to choose to build a structure such as a house or a public building in the urban periphery. The goal of these questions will partly be to arrive at an understanding of the urban periphery in its own right. But the answers that they bring about will also be applied to wider debates. These include in particular the nature of the relationship between city and country in the Roman world, as well as the nature of the relationship between urban-based provincial elites and the metropolitan elite at Rome. The aim is to demonstrate the potential contribution of periurban evidence to the debates surrounding these issues, and to add fresh perspectives.

It will already have been noted that the terms used here to describe the intermediate zone between city and country are not the seemingly obvious choices: 'suburban' and 'suburbs'. Instead, throughout this book I use the phrase 'urban periphery' to describe the zone as a whole, and the adjective 'periurban' to describe individual features belonging to it. Although perhaps slightly cumbersome, there are two reasons for preferring these terms.

First, the Latin adjective, '*suburbanus*', and the rarer noun, '*suburbium*', carried specialised connotations in the ancient world, as chapter 2 reveals. Although both *could* be used in any context, in practice they are most frequently used to describe a specific landscape of private villa properties around the city of Rome. The goal of this book, however, is to explore the phenomenon of periurban development on a wider level than this. For this

reason, the term '*suburbanus*' and its modern derivatives are reserved for discussing features around Rome itself, and alternative terms are used when discussing other cities. This approach is in keeping with an established modern convention of using the word '*suburbium*' as a technical term for the region around Rome.⁶ Meanwhile, the other Latin terms which were used to describe the urban periphery either assume that it is distinguished from the urban centre by walls ('*extra murum*' and '*extra moenia*'), or define it only in relation to the city without necessarily implying that it is in any way different from the countryside ('*extra urbem*'). Although these have given rise to modern derivations such as extra-mural and extra-urban which could be used here, their roots again make them problematic. The cities of Roman Gaul, which are central to this book, amply demonstrate that walls were not necessary to create a clear distinction between the urban centre and its periphery. It is also crucial to the identity of the urban periphery that it was different from the countryside, and did not simply mean 'anything outside the city'.

The second major reason for rejecting the terms 'suburban' and 'suburbs' lies in their modern associations. For most westerners, these terms carry connotations derived from two related contexts: a knowledge of medieval and early modern urbanism in Europe, and an experience of modern European and American cities. Ideas of the suburban drawn from these contexts, however, are at odds with the reality of the Roman urban periphery in several important ways. First, the medieval or early modern city. 'Suburbs', wrote Braudel of fifteenth- to eighteenth-century Europe, 'housed the poor, artisans, watermen, noisy malodorous trades, cheap inns, posting-houses, stables for post-horses, porters' lodgings.'⁷ The vision is of suburbs as a second-rate space, where people and activities expelled from the urban centre 'washed up' alongside one another. The Roman urban periphery was indeed home to traders and artisans, but it also featured monumental public buildings and wealthy elite housing. The idea of the suburb as a lower-class overspill zone is an anachronism for the Roman world: and, as we shall see, has arguably given rise to misinterpretations of its economic activity.

Medieval and early modern cities, though, did share with their Roman predecessors a tendency to have a distinct centre marked out by visible urban boundaries: either city walls, or, in the Roman period, other alternatives which will be introduced in chapter 3. The distinction between centre and suburbs in modern European and American cities is not usually so sharp. The transition from their centres to older, 'inner' suburbs,⁸ and more recent 'outer' suburbs,⁹ is usually detectable through changes in the character of the occupation and the age of the buildings, rather than because visible boundary markers are passed. Both inner and outer suburbs in Europe and America are also often the result of planned urban expansion, and as such tend to have a very homogeneous character. This gives rise to the endless landscape of identical houses and white picket-fences portrayed in films such as *American*

Beauty (and parodied in *Edward Scissorhands*), or, in a British context, a neighbourhood of cul-de-sacs and semi-detached houses satirised in sitcoms like *The Good Life* and *Birds of a Feather*. But Roman periurban development was rarely planned, and tended to be varied in character and appearance. Finally, land-use in the outer suburbs of modern cities is usually heavily 'zoned'. Outer suburbs are known for their commuter villages, industrial estates and, increasingly, retail parks. Although Roman periurban development could sometimes be dominated by a single type of land-use, this was not widespread. It was far more common for land outside a Roman urban centre to host a variety of structures and activities which existed side by side.

For all of these reasons, then, 'suburb' and 'suburban' are somewhat misleading terms to use in a Roman context, and especially of provincial cities. They evoke either the specific context of metropolitan Rome, or the suburbs of later cities, very different from their Roman equivalents. The words 'periurban' and 'urban periphery' are less loaded with existing connotations, and yet aptly describe occupation which is neither fully urban nor fully rural. Using these terms allows development on the fringes of Roman cities to be examined on its own terms, with less danger that the picture will be clouded by images drawn from elsewhere.

What is certain is that the need for such an examination is pressing, whatever term is employed to describe its subject. To date, the peripheries of Roman cities have received all too little attention. Past approaches to the study of Roman urbanism have frequently been based on the implicit assumption that the relationship between city and country was antithetical, with a sharp line dividing them both physically and conceptually. This is especially true of economic approaches: indeed, the polar division between city and country is an underlying principle of the 'consumer city' debate.¹⁰ Such a viewpoint is not surprising, since it is in keeping with expressions of the same antithesis to be found in the ancient world (see chapter 2). But it leaves little scope for scholarly investigations of anything falling between the two poles. As a result, much work on Roman urbanism has overlooked the urban periphery, and the contribution which it can make to a richer understanding of the relationship between a Roman city and its rural surroundings.¹¹ Meanwhile, closer examinations of Roman literary texts and archaeological evidence reveal that the relationship between city and country was not as starkly opposed as it might at first appear. In fact, it was ambiguous and open to inversion: and the urban periphery is only a particularly vivid illustration of this.

This is not to say that no work at all has been done on Roman periurban development. Much has been written on the *suburbium* of Rome, partly because it is especially prominent in our literary sources, and partly because of the degree of archaeological attention which Rome in general has received.¹² The indispensable *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae* is even now

being supplemented by a second series devoted to the Roman *suburbium* under the title *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae: Suburbium*.¹³ There have also been studies of periurban occupation outside specific provincial cities, such as Lincoln or Bologna,¹⁴ and some more detailed works aiming to review periurban development across a whole province. In 1987, Simon Esmonde Cleary published a monograph on the subject of extra-mural development at towns in Roman Britain,¹⁵ while a conference held in France in 1997 focused on periurban occupation outside Gallo-Roman cities.¹⁶

These latter two publications have been particularly important steps forward in expanding the study of Roman urban peripheries into the provinces, and away from the special circumstances of Rome.¹⁷ However, their scope could have been wider. Esmonde Cleary took a strictly archaeological approach to the towns of Roman Britain, employing textual evidence only when discussing the legal and administrative aspects of extra-mural occupation. He was able to produce an extremely comprehensive account of the physical form of extra-mural occupation in Roman Britain. But some conclusions which could have been drawn by comparing this account with evidence from other parts of the empire fell outside the scope of his work. He was unable to comment, for instance, on whether Romano-British cities were influenced by Roman literary treatments of the urban periphery. Meanwhile the papers of the French conference were written by many different authors, covering either specific periurban issues or individual sites. This encouraged a valuable range of ideas, approaches and regional studies. But it meant that the opportunities to draw comparisons between findings from different sites, or present an overall account of periurban development across Gaul, were limited.

Here, I shall again focus on one particular region – the four provinces of Gaul – but will seek explicitly to set the periurban development observed there into the wider context of urbanism throughout the western provinces of the Roman empire. My intention is to strike a balance between a detailed treatment of periurban development in a meaningful regional context, and an overview of the phenomenon of the Roman urban periphery as a whole. I shall examine both archaeological and non-archaeological evidence from a range of geographical contexts, and use this to draw direct comparisons between different cities within Gaul, and between Gallo-Roman cities and those in other parts of the empire.

Chapters 2 and 3 will begin by examining periurban development as an empire-wide phenomenon. Chapter 2 explores the ‘thought-world’ associated with this type of occupation: in Rome itself and in the places touched by Rome. Chapter 3 then goes on to look at the archaeology of the urban periphery, asking in particular how periurban occupation can be identified from a modern perspective. Chapters 4 to 6 will then move on to a detailed examination of the character and function of periurban development in the specific context of Roman Gaul. As these chapters will establish, Gallo-Roman

cities have enough coherence as a group of related sites to allow meaningful comparisons to be drawn between them, and for an overall picture of periurban development in this region to be constructed. Finally, the concluding chapter considers the contribution of the periurban evidence from Gaul to our understanding of Roman urbanism as a whole, and especially to debates concerning the city–country relationship and the relationship between Rome and the provinces.

THE URBAN PERIPHERY IN ROMAN THOUGHT

Introduction

Much of the rationale behind setting out to study the Roman urban periphery rests on the fact that it was a recognised entity in the ancient world, and thus had meaning within Roman society. The evidence which indicates that this was so, however, can tell us much more than this. Legal documents, literary texts, and visual images provide an insight into the thought-world of the urban periphery, as well as the various means by which Roman observers distinguished the periurban from the urban or the rural.¹ This evidence comes primarily from an elite perspective: it was chiefly produced by and for individuals who held a dominant position within Roman society, and who were generally male, wealthy, well-educated and politically active. Specifically, much of it was produced by or for members of the unique metropolitan elite based at Rome. The view of the periurban which it preserves, then, is very much that of a select group. None the less, the very social dominance of those who belonged to this group makes their perspective of particular interest. These people were in a position to disseminate their understanding of the urban periphery to others via art, literature and the law. They were also able to affect the physical appearance of actual urban landscapes, both at Rome and elsewhere, through their control over land and wealth.

This chapter, then, aims to explore the attitudes towards and understanding of the urban periphery typically held by the elite of the Roman empire, through an examination of legal, literary and visual evidence. The legal status of the urban periphery, its importance as an element in Roman urbanism and the associations which it evoked will be investigated, while the issue of the extent to which these details were held to apply to provincial cities as well as Rome will also be raised. The conclusions drawn here will then provide a helpful context for the analysis of archaeological evidence from Gaul in chapters 4–6, and especially for establishing the extent to which the Gallo-Roman elite appear to have been influenced by the thought-world revealed in this chapter. Direct evidence for elite ideas about the urban

periphery does not survive from the Gaul of the high empire, although some is available from late antique Gaul in the form of letters and poems, and will be treated in chapter 6. However, if the archaeological evidence for elite activity in the urban peripheries of Gaul can be viewed in the light of what is known about modes of thought constructed around such zones by elites elsewhere in the Roman world, this will at least allow us to ask whether the behaviour of the Gallo-Roman elite was consistent with such views. Was the thought-world of either Rome's urban periphery in particular, or periurban development more generally, part of the model of Roman urbanism that was transmitted to the Gallic elite, and did they seek to emulate it? This issue will be tackled in chapter 7, after the evidence from Gaul has been evaluated on its own terms.

The urban, the rural and the periurban

The urban periphery has already been defined as a zone which was neither entirely urban nor entirely rural, and could be recognised as such by an observer familiar with Roman urbanism. For the present, we will assume that an urban periphery could only exist when there was something recognisably urban against which to define it, although this assumption will be revisited and tested in chapter 5. If this is the case, then the concepts of 'the urban' and 'the rural' need to be reviewed before the thought-world of the urban periphery can be properly explored. Once again, the surviving evidence for Roman ideas about city and country comes from the elite, and especially the metropolitan elite at Rome. But since it is their concept of the urban periphery that we are seeking to understand, then it is their construction of the relationship between the city and the countryside which most needs to be examined here.

In order to understand the elite ideology of city and country in the Roman world, it is first important to consider the role which both played in the administration of the Roman empire, and the actual legal relationship between them. The basic administrative unit adopted or imposed across the Roman empire was not in fact the city *per se*, but rather a semi-autonomous civic community. Most of the empire was divided up into such communities,² and the leaders of each managed the day-to-day government of their land and people on Rome's behalf. The administration of each community usually centred on a single dominant city, where the local elite would meet, oversee local affairs and liaise directly with the central government in Rome. Other settlements within the community's territory were then administered from that city. Around this basic model, many varieties of civic community were recognised within the empire, and were distinguished by their different levels of status. In the western part of the empire, a hierarchy of communities developed, progressing upwards from a native or 'peregrine' community (including the *civitates* of Africa, Britain, Gaul and Spain), to a *municipium*

and finally a *colonia*.³ In the east, *coloniae* also existed, but most communities were interested only in attaining or maintaining the status of a Greek *polis*.⁴

The laws governing individual Roman civic communities varied according to their status, their cultural background and the period when they had come under Roman influence.⁵ *Coloniae* and *municipia* were granted charters, establishing constitutions which broadly reflected the administrative system at Rome itself. Direct constitutional intervention was less common in established Greek *poleis*, but Greek civic constitutions could be revised at Roman discretion, and newly created *poleis* did receive charters from Rome.⁶ *Civitates* were technically allowed to govern themselves using their own laws, but when agreements were drawn up to formalise the relationship between these communities and Rome, measures were probably taken to ensure that these laws were consistent with Rome's interests.⁷ Significant differences could therefore exist between local legal systems, but all were liable to some degree of modification from Rome. It can be assumed that this was used to ensure conformity to the basic model of a population governed from an administrative city which Rome required to manage the empire.

In constitutional charters, very little distinction appears to have been made between urban and rural land or city- and country-dwellers. Where these charters use words such as '*colonia*' or '*municipium*' to define the scope of a law, this usually refers to the community as a whole, rather than its principal city. Thus both city and country were seen as the combined property of the community, and the same laws governed the population in any part of it.⁸ In this sense, city and country were complementary elements of a common unit. Within that unit, however, each served different functions. The city acted as a base for legal and political activity, and its structural and administrative links with Rome provided a means for interaction with the rest of the empire. It was also a convenient focus for other communal activities, such as social interaction, religious rituals and trade. Meanwhile, the community's rural land was dedicated primarily to agricultural exploitation, which formed the basis of the community's wealth. Thus two different spheres of action were defined. Significantly, the local elite would generally be active in both spheres, since they needed to spend time in the city in order to participate in local politics, but they also needed to own and oversee land in the country in order to generate and maintain the wealth which supported this. Meanwhile, Roman civil law, which applied to Roman citizens living in provincial communities alongside the laws written into constitutional charters,⁹ could distinguish between the urban and the rural. Thus the professional land-surveyors, whose job included investigating property disputes, recognised the potential for disagreements over land in two different spheres: the urban and the rural.¹⁰

Turning to literary portrayals of city and country, we find that one dominant theme is a desire to distinguish sharply between the two. Writers often portray city and country as an antithetical pair with opposing characteristics,

especially on a moral level. A vivid example of such treatment occurs at the beginning of book 3 of Varro's *De Re Rustica*. Varro declares that there are two ways of life, '*rustica et urbana*' (the rural life and the urban life),¹¹ which he distinguishes on a historical, but also a moral level: 'the culture of the field is not only more ancient, but also more virtuous'.¹² For Varro, the rustic life is superior because country-dwelling Romans had always provided food and military aid to the state: by implication, city-dwellers have meanwhile contributed nothing. The theme Varro presents here is a literary commonplace, with which all well-educated Romans would have been familiar. The antithetical relationship between city and country, especially on a moral level, appears in literature of all genres,¹³ and is even recommended by Quintilian as a suitable topic for mock classroom debates.¹⁴ As Quintilian's recommendation implies, the subject was also capable of being inverted, so that an urban lifestyle could just as readily be presented as morally superior to a rural one. Both sides of the debate appear in Cicero's defence of Sextus Roscius of Ameria, where Cicero argues that Roscius' rural background makes him less likely than a city-dweller to have committed murder, while his opponents claim that it makes him 'savage and uncultivated' (*ferum atque agrestem*).¹⁵

The city itself was portrayed in elite literature as an important symbol of sophistication and civilisation, and especially of *romanitas* (essentially, 'Roman-ness'). Thus, Tacitus in his *Germania* is able to convey to his elite Roman audience just how barbarous and alien the Germans are by telling them, 'it is well known that no German people live in cities, indeed that they do not allow joined buildings amongst them'.¹⁶ The same theme arises in Tacitus' *Histories*, when he has an embassy from the German tribe of the Tencteri offer an alliance to the people of the Colonia Agrippinensis (Köln) on the condition that they kill all Romans within their territory and pull down the walls of their city.¹⁷ Thus the destruction of a major urban monument, described by the Tencteri as 'bulwarks of slavery' (*munimenta servitii*), would symbolise as complete a rejection of Roman rule as the slaughter of actual Romans.

From these passages, it is clear that evidence of *urbanitas* ('urban-ness') in a city was simultaneously a sign of *romanitas*. It indicated that the city, and by extension the community administered from it, was part of the privileged and civilised world of the Roman empire. *Urbanitas* itself sprang in part from a city's political status as the dominant administrative centre of a civic community. However, by the Roman period, urban identity had also come to be judged on the basis of the city's appearance, and particularly its public monuments. This attitude is well illustrated by the comments of Pausanias, writing in the second century AD, on the Greek city of Panopeus in Phocis.¹⁸ Pausanias himself tells us that Panopeus is the centre of an independent city-state, since it sends delegates to the Phocian assembly, and has a territory defined by borders with neighbouring communities. The complete lack

of government offices, gymnasium, theatre, *agora* or public fountains there, however, causes him to doubt whether Panoepus can really be called a *polis*. Clearly, then, public monuments could carry almost as much weight in judgements of *urbanitas* as the political role of the settlement in question. If a settlement failed to make a sufficient display of urban status through its public monuments, its identity as a 'true' city could be questioned, and, consequently, so could the semi-autonomous status of the community it administered.

The idea that urban status was contestable is also supported by other evidence. Strabo, for instance, argues against 'those who assert that there are more than one thousand cities [*poleis*] in Iberia' on the grounds that they 'seem to me to be led to do so by calling the big villages [*megalas komas*] cities'.¹⁹ One consequence of this potential for questioning urban identity was that settlements with no political function, such as large towns within the territories of other dominant cities, could aspire to a form of urban identity through other means, such as the erection of public monuments. Sometimes, this could even result in the attainment of actual urban status. Inscriptions from the Greek east reveal that some secondary centres were promoted to the status of *polis* after convincing the emperor of their worthiness.²⁰

A well-educated member of the metropolitan elite at Rome, then, or a provincial who was conscious of metropolitan Roman culture and wished to align himself with it, should have been familiar with an ideology of city and country which included several basic elements. First, he should have been aware of a sharp antithesis between city and country, particularly on moral grounds. Second, he should have understood that the cities used as administrative centres by Rome's subject communities were potent symbols of the status of those communities, and especially of their membership of the wider Roman world. And finally, he should have been aware of the importance of the physical fabric of the city, and especially its monumental public buildings, in expressing a community's *urbanitas* and, consequently, its *romanitas*. It is now possible to consider how these ideas related to actual elite behaviour in the city, and especially those aspects of elite behaviour which left their mark on the urban fabric.

A close connection can immediately be identified between the literary polarisation of city and country and the physical boundaries established around most Roman cities. The most obvious such boundaries are city walls: well-attested at Rome itself, and numerous provincial cities. Their very presence was a potent symbol of urban status in itself,²¹ partly no doubt because of the command over resources and manpower which they demonstrated, but perhaps also because they displayed a commitment to the ideology of the city as a distinct and privileged space. As chapter 3 will demonstrate, however, even where walls were lacking, other types of visible marker were regularly used to define the edges of a Roman city, including monumental arches, the edges of an orthogonal street layout or natural features such as rivers.

These markers would make it clear to both residents and visitors when they were passing between rural and urban space, thus drawing attention to the differences between city and country.

The extent to which features such as city walls or orthogonal grid-plans in newly founded provincial cities were imposed by the central Roman administration or adopted voluntarily by local elites is somewhat uncertain. Two references in the *Digesta* suggest that by the second century AD at least, the construction of a walled circuit around any provincial city could be authorised only by the emperor.²² This does not mean that the initiative for wall-building could not come from the provincial communities themselves, however, only that they would have to seek the emperor's permission to proceed. Meanwhile, Hanson argues that the relative lack of orthogonal grids in secondary settlements in the north-western provinces suggests that they were imposed on the sites of major administrative cities by Roman planners rather than initiated by the local elite.²³ Woolf, however, posits a greater level of provincial input, and explains the same pattern in terms of the immense cost to the community involved in establishing an orthogonal layout.²⁴ Whatever the circumstances of their initial creation, though, the subsequent maintenance of urban boundaries at any kind of provincial city must have been largely the responsibility of the local civic authorities. Archaeological evidence from across the empire suggests that these bodies were very interested in maintaining visual markers at the edges of their cities, even where actual occupation had expanded beyond them (see chapter 3). Thus provincial elites do appear to have wanted to distinguish between urban and rural space in their own right, even where Rome was no longer directly encouraging them to do so.

The Roman interest in distinguishing physically between the urban and the rural probably had its origins in defensive practicalities and a religious desire to ensure the favour of the gods by marking out sacred space.²⁵ However, in the context of the *pax Romana* of the high imperial period, it is also likely to have become linked with the two other major themes discussed above; the importance of *urbanitas* as a symbol of civilised and semi-autonomous status, and the role of the urban fabric in displaying it to others. The elite in any Roman city regularly made benefactions of public buildings, primarily in order to boost their own personal status.²⁶ A strong secondary motivation, however, is likely to have been an interest in enhancing the status of the community as a whole.²⁷ Their awareness of the contestability of urban status would have made this desirable, not least because their own standing would be greater if their city was widely recognised as highly urbane and sophisticated. By distinguishing sharply between city and country, local elites could potentially increase the effectiveness of such displays of status. The boundaries around a provincial city made it into a carefully defined arena, and ensured that the monuments erected within it would all be clearly understood as of and belonging to the city. Meanwhile, some of the

features which helped to define this arena, such as city walls, monumental arches or a street-grid would also demonstrate *urbanitas* in themselves.

The antithesis between city and country, however, was not always as stark in reality as elite authors and town-planners might have wished. Archaeological evidence in fact points towards a very close relationship between most Roman cities and the surrounding countryside. This includes the farming of land immediately around the city by people resident within it,²⁸ as well as horticulture and even animal husbandry within the walls.²⁹ The elite themselves were also extremely capable of inverting the normal distinction between city and country, and making deliberate displays of *urbanitas* in the country or *rusticitas* in the city.³⁰ Perhaps the ultimate example of this is Nero's Golden House, the hostile reactions to which, Purcell argues, were provoked largely by the extravagance of Nero's attempt to bring landscapes properly belonging to the countryside into the centre of Rome.³¹ Such elite inversions of city and country drew much of their effectiveness, and their notoriety, from the traditional interest in distinguishing between the two. However, the fact that they were made reveals that this interest was not universal.

The clearest indication of the gap between the elite ideology of the city and the reality of Roman urbanism, however, must be the persistent development of periurban occupation beyond the boundaries of urban centres. Not only is this type of occupation attested archaeologically at numerous cities, it was also recognised by the same authors who were interested in portraying city and country as polar opposites. Thus Horace, famous for his fable of the town mouse and the country mouse,³² can be found in the same book of his *Satires* complaining about the washed-out flavour of cabbage grown in suburban market-gardens.³³ The widespread evidence for periurban occupation outside Roman urban centres suggests that, in spite of elite attempts to define their cities with clear visible boundaries, other forces at work in Roman society actually encouraged a more gradual transition from city to countryside. The tension between these social forces and the elite ideology of the city may thus have helped to *create* a recognisable urban periphery, excluded from the urban centre by the elite interest in defining that centre with largely static boundaries, but differentiated from the countryside by its special relationship with the city. This hypothesis will be explored in further detail using the archaeological evidence from Gaul in chapters 4–6.

The urban periphery in Roman law

Our exploration of the evidence for Roman perceptions of the urban periphery begins with legal texts, which seek to define it for the purposes of legislation or property disputes, and to regulate land-use within it. The definitions they offer can help us to understand how Roman observers distinguished between urban, rural and periurban features, and to what extent it was

actually possible for them to produce a rigid definition which would reliably tell them apart. Meanwhile, the fact that recognisable references to the urban periphery appear in legal documents at all also gives us some insight into attitudes towards it. It demonstrates, for instance, that periurban occupation was in some cases considered important enough to warrant special legal or administrative provisions. The documents discussed in this section include rulings from Roman civil law, colonial and municipal charters, and also inscribed prohibitions from various contexts. Some comparisons between the legal treatment of periurban occupation at Rome and elsewhere are therefore possible, although limited by the small total number of documents.

One major legal and administrative problem arising from the existence of periurban development was that of defining the city. Distinguishing the city from the countryside could be an important issue in defining the sphere of application of certain laws, as well as settling disputes over inherited property. At Rome, more than one jurist tackled the problem by drawing a distinction between the *urbs*, which technically meant only the area within the so-called 'Servian' wall, and the more inclusive term, *Roma*.³⁴ The following definition originally formulated by the Augustan jurist, P. Alfenus Varus, appears in the *Digesta* as a citation from the mid-second-century lawyer Ulpius Marcellus:

As Alfenus said, '*urbs*' means '*Roma*' which was surrounded by a wall, but '*Roma*' also extends as far as there are continuous buildings: for it can be understood from daily use that Rome is not considered to extend only as far as the wall, since we say that we are going to Rome, even if we live outside the *urbs*.³⁵

Alfenus included two distinct zones within his definition of *Roma*: not only the *urbs* itself, as defined by the Servian wall, but also the continuous occupation (*continentia aedificia*) lying beyond those walls.³⁶ His reference to the conventions of everyday speech reveals that the dense, urban-style occupation outside the Servian wall was normally considered a part of Rome by its inhabitants. However, the need to formulate such a definition shows that its identity as part of the city could also be contested. The extra-mural section of the *continentia aedificia* to which Alfenus refers was thus a part of Rome's urban periphery. It was considered to belong to the agglomeration of Rome, rather than to the countryside, but it was excluded from the urban centre marked out by the walls.

The concept of the *continentia aedificia* makes its first known appearance on the Tabula Heraclensis, in a law certainly predating 46–45 BC, and perhaps part of a Caesarian *lex Iulia municipalis*.³⁷ A clause of this law concerning road maintenance is said to apply 'in the city of Rome or nearer than one thousand paces to the city of Rome where it is continuously inhabited'.³⁸ The reference to continuously inhabited areas is equivalent to Alfenus' inclusion

of built-up extra-mural regions in his definition of Rome, although here there is also a proviso that they must lie within a fixed distance of the city. The aims of the law include ensuring the maintenance of urban streets and preventing them from being blocked by wheeled traffic. The legislators appear to have considered that the built-up areas outside the Servian wall were urban enough in character to need such regulation, but to have recognised that they were not technically part of the *urbs*, and needed to be designated by a different phrase if the law was to be understood to apply to them. In later rulings, the concept of the entire *continentia aedificia* is used to define the areas affected by the *leges Iulia* and *Papia*,³⁹ as well as the places where a person could be said to be 'present at Rome'.⁴⁰ As in the *Tabula Heracleensis*, these definitions seem to have been rendered necessary by the mismatch between the actual extent of the urban-style occupation at Rome and the technical limits of the *urbs*.⁴¹ However, it is important to note that they are not actually definitions of the urban periphery, but definitions of the city which seek to include periurban occupation. Only those parts of the *continentia aedificia* falling outside the Servian wall were actually periurban, while other periurban features which were not continuous with Rome, such as suburban villas or satellite settlements, would not be affected by these laws.

Rome was not the only city where the concept of the *continentia aedificia* was used in legislation. The *lex Irnitana*, a Flavian charter created for the otherwise unknown Spanish *municipium* of Irni or Irnium, includes a clause forbidding the de-roofing, demolition or dismantling of a building 'in the city [*oppidum*] of the Flavian *municipium* of Irni and where there are buildings continuous with that city'.⁴² The word *oppidum* is used to show that the law is intended to apply to the city only, and not the whole territory of the *municipium*, but the legislators have then added a reference to the *continentia aedificia* in order not to exclude occupation which lay outside the actual urban centre but was, practically speaking, part of the city.⁴³ Significantly, this assumes that, as for the *urbs* at Rome, the word *oppidum* was understood to designate only a specific area marked out by urban boundaries, a practice explored further in chapter 3. It may be that occupation outside these boundaries already existed at Irni when the charter was granted, explaining the inclusive scope of the law, or that the drafters of the constitution were allowing for the development of periurban occupation in future. It is more likely, however, that the *continentia aedificia* was simply invoked at Irni in imitation of the precedents already established at Rome.⁴⁴

A concept closely related to the *continentia aedificia* is the area less than one thousand paces (*passus mille*, or one Roman mile) from Rome. This appears as another means of ensuring that occupation outside the *urbs* proper is subject to laws intended to apply to the whole of the city of Rome.⁴⁵ The figure of one thousand paces was probably not to be taken literally, but rather as a round number certain to include all built-up occupation outside the Servian wall. Indeed, the method of counting the thousand paces seems to have

been debated. The mid-second-century lawyer Gaius informs us that the judgements of the urban praetor are valid if made 'in the city of Rome or within the first milestone of the city of Rome',⁴⁶ yet the early third-century jurist Macer asserts that 'the one thousand paces are to be measured not from the milestone of the city but from the continuous buildings'.⁴⁷ The idea that what was really meant was not a literal radius, but all extra-mural occupation of urban character, is supported by the qualification of the '*passus mille*' on the Tabula Heracleensis by the phrase, '*ubei continente habitabitur*' (where it is continuously inhabited).⁴⁸ This law, then, applied not to the entire area within one mile's radius of the urban centre, but only to the parts of that zone which were densely built up. Later in the same text, the '*passus mille*' phrase appears without qualification,⁴⁹ but the reference to continuous habitation at its first appearance and the particular relevance of this law to built-up areas probably imply that this should be understood throughout the statute.⁵⁰

Like the concept of the *continentia aedificia*, the *passus mille* clause could also be applied in a provincial context to extend the scope of legislation beyond a demarcated urban centre. The *lex Coloniae Genetivae*, a Caesarian charter granted to the Spanish *colonia* of Urso, stipulated that the community's decurions, augurs and pontiffs should have a house 'in the city [*oppidum*] or closer than one thousand paces to the city'.⁵¹ The aim of the clause was probably to ensure personal interest in the community's principal city, and it would appear that the legislators considered the ownership of property within a mile's radius to be as sound a guarantee of this as property within the boundaries of the city proper. As at Irni, it is most likely that such provisions were made in the charter simply because the legislators were attempting to imitate similar institutions at Rome. However, we should not rule out the possibility that the legislators were allowing for the real development of built-up occupation beyond Urso's urban centre.

These examples of legislation reveal a need to manage the difference between areas technically defined as urban, and occupation which was urban in character but fell outside an area strictly designated as 'the city'. Such occupation, then, was ambiguous in status, since it could be considered to have or to lack an urban identity depending on the nature of the judgement: legal or quotidian. This same ambiguity could also be exploited in private property disputes. Two rulings in the *Digesta* express the opinion that legacies of property described in a will as being simply 'at Rome' should be held to include property technically outside the *urbs*.⁵² Interestingly, a third ruling relating to the *municipium* of Gades (Cádiz) in Spain determines that the phrase '*quidquid in patria Gadibus possideo*' (whatever I possess in Gades, my home-town) can be extended to include the '*suburbanum adiacentem possessionem*' (adjacent suburban possession).⁵³ While the phrases '*continentia aedificia*' and '*passus mille*' may have been used in legislation at Irni and Urso simply in emulation of Rome, this appears to be a direct response to a specific periurban