CHAPTER 6

Anglo-Saxon Sculpture and Rome: Perspectives and Interpretations

Having seen the many and varied ways in which early Christian Anglo-Saxon architecture could articulate ideas of 'Rome', this chapter will turn to review the other public art form of the Anglo-Saxon landscape, the stone sculpture, to consider also its relationship with concepts of 'Romanness'. This is an aspect that has emerged – more or less tangentially – from other scholarly analyses of the material, but it has not been used as a common denominator to interpret and understand Anglo-Saxon sculpture in its own right. In the course of the twentieth century, scholars from different disciplines have developed research questions often strictly related to their own circumstantial agendas or concerns when discussing this kind of material, and this has tended to affect and limit the information that could be gained. It is only recently that some more interdisciplinary approaches have been suggested which provide a fuller understanding of the artistic and cultural achievement conveyed through Anglo-Saxon sculpture.

6.1 The scholarship

6.1 a) Typology and Style[1]

Any discussion of Anglo-Saxon sculpture opens with an account of the work of W.G. Collingwood (1854-1932) [2] and the impact that it has had on the development of subsequent studies.[3] As such, he is generally considered to have

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[1] For a recent and full discussion on the subject see the forthcoming work by A. Denton, *An Anglo-Saxon Theory of Style: motif, mode and meaning in the art of eighth-century Northumbria* (PhD, York, 2011); I am grateful to her for the chance of reading and discussing her work.

[2] See http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/39918?docPos=7 (accessed February 2010)

[3] See for example *Anglo-Saxon and Viking Age Sculpture and its Context: papers from the Collingwood Symposium on Insular sculpture from 800 to 1066*, J. Lang (ed.), B.A.R. British Series 49 (1978); J. Hawkes, 'Collingwood and Anglo-Saxon sculpture: art history or archaeology?' in *Making and Meaning in Insular Art. Proceedings of the fifth international conference on Insular art held at Trinity College Dublin, 25-28 August 2005*, R. Moss (ed.), Dublin 2007, pp. 142-52; Id., 'Studying Early

'founded' the study of Anglo-Saxon sculpture, and so determined the manner in which the sculpture would be viewed and reviewed by other scholars.

At the core of Collingwood's research lay the aim to establish the origin and evolution of the 'high cross' monument form, seen as distinctive of an Anglo-Saxon 'race', a concept pervasive in his work and somehow typical of late-nineteenth-century scholarship. Building on his initial articles on the Anglo-Saxon sculpture of Yorkshire,[4] he systematically defined the groups forming the Anglo-Saxon 'race' in order to explain, in his description of the monuments, the mixture of different styles and ornamentation which thus reflected similar ethnic, racial processes. Collingwood's method aimed at organising Anglo-Saxon sculpture, focusing on typology (classification within categories), and identifying the different 'types' according to the presence or absence of certain patterns, associating them ultimately with the monument forms on which they were preserved. It must be noted as well that Collingwood's main interest lied in Viking-period sculpture,[5] and that the need to identify it motivated his concern for dating and establishing well-limited temporal frames for the earlier and later sculpture.

Because of his dating priorities, he concentrated mainly on non-figural carvings, which constitute the majority (in numerical terms) of Anglo-Saxon sculptures and offer the most immediate material to create 'phases' of decoration; Collingwood always postulated a series with a nascent stage, a peak and a decline, in which the most pure, simple form is assumed to be the earlier, evolving to a more detailed, varied and conventional one, deemed to be later (and a sign of 'grotesque' decadence).[6] He also connected racial identity and choice of decoration, creating an almost mechanical equation that on the one hand ignores the potential symbolic significance attached to different types of

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Christian Sculpture in England and Ireland: the Object of Art History or Archaeology?' in *Proceedings of the British Academy* 157 (2009), pp. 397-408.

[4] For discussion and references see CASSS, vol. 6, pp. 1-3.

[5] Like (after him) Bailey and Lang among the others.

[6] W.G. Collingwood, *Northumbrian Crosses of the Pre-Norman Age*, London 1927, pp. 30, 49, 57.

ornamentation, while also implying the rejection of the movement of artists and/or artefacts, of the possible cross-influences between media and styles, and the possibility of an appropriation of racial identity through the adoption of certain monuments and/or styles.[7] Collingwood's systematic survey seems to award autonomy and authority to Anglo-Saxon sculpture, while at the same time underlining its apparent failure to meet a 'standard' which was only partially compensated by the variety and ingenuity expressed by the authors of the carvings who, nevertheless, were deemed to have little understanding of the subtle implications of ornamentation.[8]

Although now regarded as dated, Collingwood's work did establish sculpture as an art form to be investigated academically and within the field of archaeology, and influenced others, especially his contemporaries. A.W. Clapham (1883-1950),[9] for instance, took account of the sculpture within his study of Anglo-Saxon art overall, and seemed to produce a wider and more balanced account, but he too was mainly concerned with issues of dating, and so, despite his awareness of the need for 'a proper regard to the historical and geographical background of each individual' monument,[10] was also concerned with the information provided by the details of the ornament in each monument form, which were articulated in terms of the 'achievement' in carving and sculpture and a supposed inferiority – or superiority – against a certain, expected standard, the nature of which remains difficult to comprehend.

In this respect, is noteworthy in Clapham's work his puzzlement in realizing the existence in Anglo-Saxon England of an artistic production which he regarded as accomplished, superior and fully-formed, but still coming from people who had only 'recently emerged from a barbaric state […] without any of the preparatory phases leading up to the final achievement'.[11] His confusion

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[7] Collingwood, *Northumbrian Crosses*, p. 31.

[8] Id., p. 19.

[9] See http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32415?docPos=1 (accessed February 2010).

[10] A.W. Clapham, *English Romanesque Architecture before the Conquest*, Oxford 1930, p. 55.

[11] Clapham, *English Romanesque Architecture*, p. 61.

is that inherent in a theoretical view of an art bound to evolve according to a well defined cycle, and in the problem of finding a clear 'origin' or model to Anglo-Saxon art: answering the questions of where and when strongly precedes the issues of why and how.[12]

As much as Clapham's approach was measured, his near contemporary T.D. Kendrick (1895-1979), [13] probably influenced by his anthropological background, returned to the explicit theorization of a insuperable clash in Anglo-Saxon art between the principles of 'classical' and 'barbaric'.[14] Kendrick's language and examples know no middle ground while continuing to emphasize the connection between style and race, and the cyclical evolution in which the 'pleasant and easy naturalism' is, by default, followed by 'a rigid schematic style'.[15] Despite Kendrick's prose being at times off-putting to a modern reader, it is important to underline that classification, of ornament, animal, vegetable or geometrical patterns, was and is an essential tool in identifying motifs that sometimes, reduced to very synthetic forms, can be difficult to decipher. At the same time, it is imperative to reaffirm that classification cannot stand alone as a methodological approach and the evolution of a pattern or design cannot be meaningful *per se*, cannot be justified only in defining a temporal sequence, and moreover cannot be burdened with unnecessary and biased judgement toward the rendering of said patterns or designs.[16]

With this in mind, Kendrick's passion for the codification and labelling of the evolution of different motifs and patterns is in places mitigated by other considerations: his definition of the period between Theodore and Bede as 'an

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[12] Other aspects in Clapham's work underline the importance of political context when considering Anglo-Saxon monuments (possibly the first application of the concept of patronage to Anglo-Saxon sculpture and architecture), see Id. p. 67; he also (contra Collingwood) allowed for comparisons between different media, for instance between sculpture and manuscript decoration.

[13] See http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31303?docPos=5 (accessed February 2010).

[14] T.D. Kendrick, *Anglo-Saxon Art to A.D. 900*, London 1938, p. 1.

[15] Id., p. 117. It is interesting to note here a parallel with Kitzinger's opposition between Hellenistic style (Eastern/Alexandria) and Roman style. See supra, pp. 152-4.

[16] Some of Kendrick's expressions are very telling: 'decay of the manner', 'unskilled craftsmanship', 'flabby travesties' etc. See *Anglo-Saxon Art*, p. 81; for a substantially different approach see Denton, *An Anglo-Saxon Theory of Style*.

English anticipation of the great Carolingian renaissance', [17] finds correspondence with the current interpretation of the Anglo-Saxon Church – and art – as actively contributing to and preparing for the Carolingian revival. In a similar way, when he underlines the 'duality of purpose' of Anglo-Saxon work,[18] he comes close to the more recent notions of an art and architecture that privilege different layers of meaning, multiple coexisting perspectives and readings. Despite this, however, and regardless of the space devoted to detailed descriptions and analyses of the evolution and differentiation in representing animals, spirals, geometrical patterns, the subjects represented by these carvings and the reasons why they were chosen are rarely considered or mentioned by Kendrick: all attention and effort are focused on how the motifs were rendered.

These scholars thus represent the basis of a theoretical approach to the study of Anglo-Saxon sculpture that privileged motif and race. Their vision was based on the antithetical concepts of native – often defined as 'geometrical repetitive, rude, ornamental' – and classic, characterised by 'naturalistic or sympathetic'; the possibility of fusion, interaction and influences is not considered in terms of skills or active choices, but in terms of union between different races. Alongside this, an evolutionary theory of sculpture was established, with no apparent regard for aspects such as the topographical, historical and social context of the monuments, but rather interpreted in the light of a simplistic world-view of peoples and races, depicted as almost monolithic ethnic groups with well-defined characteristics.

It is perhaps surprising that, after such a charged start, the study of Anglo-Saxon sculpture has been slowly freed from the (limiting) intellectual atmosphere of the inter-war years and achieved more challenging approaches, probably less affected by the circumstantial Zeitgeist.[19]

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[17] Kendrick, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, pp. 119-20.
[18] Id., p. 121.
[19] For instance in Denton's work.

After a gap of over 25 years, Rosemary Cramp revived the archaeological tradition of the study of Anglo-Saxon sculpture but with a somewhat wider frame of reference.[20] Drawing from her experience in excavations, especially at the monastic sites of Wearmouth and Jarrow (Tyne & Wear),[21] Cramp bears witness to the intellectual evolution of a scholar who, trained in all likelihood under the influence of the 'Collingwood-Clapham-Kendrick approach', developed a growing awareness of the fluid notion of influences and cross-fertilization of different traditions and 'styles'. Albeit still sensitive to issues of dating, phases, chronology and the allure of classification of non-figural carvings,[22] in her more recent writings Cramp opens up to the more stimulating concepts of significance, audience and patronage.[23]

Alongside these considerations, Cramp's most important achievement is her work as the Director, General Editor and Contributor to the 'Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture', a project that aims at providing a complete catalogue of all the earliest sculpture in England, with photographs and detailed discussions. It is worth noting that many of the key figures in the contemporary study of Anglo-Saxon sculpture have been involved, in different ways, in the Corpus project. [24]

Among these, Jim Lang, himself a pupil of Cramp, offered several significant contributions, including a compact guide to Anglo-Saxon sculpture which includes traditionally-structured chapters on 'Form and Function' and 'Ornament and Date'.[25] Elsewhere, however, he pointed out the awareness of not so clear-cut influences on Anglo-Saxon sculpture and the fact that they cannot necessarily be applied or interpreted as always moving forward, in a

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[20] A full list of R. Cramp's publications is in *Image and power in the Archaeology of Early Medieval Britain. Essays in honour of Rosemary Cramp*, H. Hamerow & A. MacGregor (eds), Oxford 2001.

[21] See the final publication, *Wearmouth and Jarrow Monastic Sites*, Swindon 2005-2006.

[22] Especially in her earlier studies, for instance 'Early Northumbrian Sculpture at Hexham', in *Saint Wilfrid at Hexham*, D.P. Kirby (ed.), Newcastle 1974, pp. 115-40 or 'The Anglian tradition in the Ninth Century', in *Anglo-Saxon and Viking Age Sculpture*, pp. 1-32.

[23] See for instance her 'The Insular Tradition. An Overview', in *The Insular Tradition*, C.E. Karkov, M. Ryan & R. T. Farrell (eds), Albany 1997, pp. 283-99.

[24] The Project has so far published eight volumes, the first in 1984.

[25] J. Lang, *Anglo-Saxon Sculpture*, Aylesbury 1988.

cyclical fashion. These considerations are essential in moving away from a traditional, positivistic approach: 'it is difficult to establish on exclusively stylistic grounds any real framework of continuity or evolutionary development.'[26] It is interesting to note that Lang shared with many a scholar before and after him a particular interest in Viking-period sculpture and that he worked in close proximity with the excavations at York Minster, creating a further example of the fertile collaboration between the fields of archaeology and the study of Anglo-Saxon sculpture. In his work the focus on the geographical area of York and North Yorkshire was also prominent, a recurring trait of many sculpture scholars, often engaging with the landscape most familiar to them.[27]

Another member of the Corpus project with an established expertise in the study of Anglo-Saxon sculpture in general – and of that of the Viking period in particular – is Richard Bailey. Also known for his archaeological work on Wilfrid's churches at Ripon (N. Yorkshire) and Hexham (Northumberland),[28] he has devoted much of his career to the study of Viking period sculpture and has contributed significantly to the Corpus.

It is important here to underline some aspects of the Corpus project, in order to shed light on the notion of 'style', and so contribute to a fuller understanding and contextualizing of Anglo-Saxon sculpture in its reference to Rome. On the one hand, as Denton's work demonstrates, style can enable sets of associations:[29] for example the concept of *Romanitas* itself brings with it a specific 'style', regardless of the time-period and geographical location to which the work of art taken into account belongs. However, because the concepts of categories and resemblances – or shared elements – are integral to style, style

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[26] J. Lang, 'Survival and Revival in Insular Art: Northumbrian Sculpture of the 8th to 10th Centuries', in *The Age of Migrating Ideas. Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland*, R.M. Spearman & J. Higgitt (eds), Edinburgh 1993, p.261.

[27] Lang was responsible for two CASSS volumes devoted to Yorkshire, vol. 3, 'York and Eastern Yorkshire' (1991) and vol. 6, 'Northern Yorkshire' (2001).

[28] See supra, pp. 206-7, 225-30 and his *England's Earliest Sculptors*, Toronto 1996.

[29] With regards to this see Denton, *An Anglo-Saxon Theory of Style*.

and stylistic analysis have been deemed, and criticized, as mere tools for dating and classifying, while they can be used as a barometer to reveal cultural and political expectations and the intentions of the different communities and peoples responsible for the highly elaborate and diverse stone monuments in Anglo-Saxon England. Nevertheless, it must be also kept in mind that style remains a fairly subjective idea, not necessarily monolithically inherent in a work of art or its maker, and often influenced by contingent circumstances. Having said this, it may be useful to consider how style and typology have been articulated in the modern Corpus scholarship. Probably the most important statement in this respect is the introductory, separate handbook, published as the *Grammar of Anglo-Saxon Ornament*.[30] This allows scholars and users of the Corpus to establish a common 'language' with which to describe, analyse or interpret the sculpture; at the same time, keeping the 'grammar' separate has enabled the individual authors of the various volumes to explore different methods of research, thus creating a work of great breadth as well as deep insight into single regions and monuments. In addition to this, concepts of style and categories can be expanded and further applied to identify not only specific carvings or group of monuments, but also artists working in certain areas, workshops producing standardized objects or ornament, and even the suggestion of 'mass production' like that argued for Lincolnshire.[31]

A consequence of this approach in the Corpus project's methodology is the prolonged debate initiated by Fred Orton, with responses from Bailey and Ó Carragáin, in which he called into question precisely the Corpus' focus on cataloguing, dating, classifying and comparing, accusing the authors of using form and style as the main descriptive tools for the monuments, and so continuing the kind of scholarship introduced by Collingwood. This attack challenges not only the project itself, but also the team of scholars carrying it out, and their very diverse contributions, delivered in a way that privileges

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[30] R. Cramp, *Grammar of Anglo-Saxon Ornament: a general introduction to the Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*, Oxford 1991.
[31] See CASSS vol. 5.

single authors and their subject, rather than a hypothetical creed underlying the opus.[32]

The limitations of the Corpus highlighted by Orton centre on the concept of 'similarities' used to shape the approach to the sculpture. He argued that 'finding or feeling stylistic similarities is often a sign that some principle of classification has already been applied or that some interest is already at work'.[33] Orton also talks of 'accidental similarities',[34] postulating that this removes any possibility that Anglo-Saxon sculpture was a valid and self-conscious art and that it can therefore be investigated accordingly. To such observations, one could reply with E.H. Gombrich's words, that 'whether we know it or not, we always approach the past with some preconceived idea, with a rudimentary theory we wish to test'.[35]

Overall, Orton's claims now seem to be largely unjustified,[36] especially when one considers that a great part of the most interesting, challenging and prolific new approaches to Anglo-Saxon sculpture have stemmed directly from the research of scholars working on the Corpus project. Furthermore, as Bailey underlined in his response to the accusations of seriality and cataloguing, the insight on individual monuments can only be greater through the awareness, knowledge and possibility of comparison with other monuments. There must be a unifying concept behind a project with the scope of the Corpus: typological and stylistic methods are complementary and one approach cannot disregard

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[32] See F. Orton, 'Northumbrian Sculpture (The Ruthwell and Bewcastle Monuments): Questions of Difference', in *Northumbria's Golden Age*, J. Hawkes & S. Mills (eds), Stroud 1999, pp. 216-26; Id., 'Rethinking the Ruthwell and Bewcastle Monuments: Some Strictures on Similarity; Some Questions of History', R. Bailey, "Innocent from the Great Offence" and É. Ó Carragáin, 'Between Annunciation and Visitation: Spiritual Birth and the Cycles of the Sun on the Ruthwell Cross: A Response to Fred Orton', all in C.E. Karkov & F. Orton (eds), *Theorizing Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*, Morgantown 2003, respectively pp. 65-92, 93-103 and 131-87.

[33] Orton, 'Northumbrian Sculpture', p. 222.

[34] Id. p. 221.

[35] E.H. Gombrich, 'In search of cultural history' in *Art History and its methods*, E. Fernie (ed.), London 1995, p. 234; see also Denton's work.

[36] And have been mostly omitted or softened in his most recent, collaborative work on the Ruthwell cross, *Fragments of History. Rethinking the Ruthwell and Bewcastle Monuments*, F. Orton, I. Wood & C.A. Lees (eds), Manchester 2007.

the other. They do not 'limit' knowledge of a monument, but provide a comprehensive platform of homogeneous information from which any discussion can unfold. However, typology and style cannot be analysed independently or isolated from iconography: in assessing the function of a monument one can turn to its form, explore its decoration, but eventually a full account of what it represents and how will be needed. Only this manner of investigating the history of a monument can in turn open up to include consideration of the people responsible for its creation and those 'using' it, and provide one or multiple explanations of the reasons behind such a complex and intellectually rich process.

<u>6.1 b) Iconographical approaches</u>

Following these observations relating to style and typology, it seems that a possibly more organic set of questions might be posed through a third approach, one that focuses on the content, meaning and symbolic significance of a carved monument, taking into account the iconography of its decoration. In an iconographical reading, the potential layers and allusions of images are explored, often meaning that different, but equally valid interpretations can be offered for a single monument.[37]

It is emblematic that the main initiator and propagator of this type of evaluation came not from scholars working in an archaeological field, like Collingwood or Cramp, but from a literary one. Ó Carragáin has devoted most of his career to the multifaceted interaction of one Old English text, the 'Dream of the Rood', with one set of Anglo-Saxon monuments, the Ruthwell and Bewcastle Crosses, in the process achieving perhaps the highest and most organic knowledge of these iconic works.[38] Drawing on his profound expertise

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[37] M. Munsterberg, *Writing about Art*, New York 2009, p. 33.

[38] For an updated bibliography see *Text, Image, Interpretation. Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature and its Insular Context in Honour of Éamonn Ó Carragáin*, A. Minnis & J. Roberts (eds), Turnhout 2007. The impact of Ó Carragáin's work is summarized in the article by J. Hawkes, 'Gregory the Great and Angelic Mediation: The Anglo-Saxon Crosses of the Derbyshire Peaks', in *Text, Image, Interpretation*, pp. 431-48.

of history, exegesis, liturgy, languages and art, he has repeatedly demonstrated that it is only with a 360° approach that any topic can be fully appreciated, even more so when – as in the Anglo-Saxon world – the works taken into account seem sometimes to stand alone and unique, against a background which is not easy to decipher. Although his vision of the Ruthwell Cross is not universally shared in the academic world,[39] the painstaking accuracy with which he has studied every single aspect of this monument cannot be denied,[40] and he has succeeded in placing it within an historical and cultural landscape which he has brought to life, granting the cross, its makers and patrons a central and recognized place in the cultural history of Anglo-Saxon England.

Ultimately, Ó Carragáin has shown that it is possible to make the study of Anglo-Saxon sculpture less of a science: as has been outlined above, when using stylistic analysis – in line with Collingwood and his followers' method – a 'scientific' demeanour seems to be unavoidable. Nevertheless, the stylistic approach remains strongly personal and subject to multiple influences according to time and space. In light of Ó Carragáin's work, what needs to be achieved is a wider cultural experience of Anglo-Saxon sculpture: this can seem problematic when dealing with artefacts rather than the written word[41] but, as will become apparent, connections with theological, liturgical and other written sources are almost always displayed or implied in the visual iconography of these monuments. Thus, the questions raised by adopting an approach similar to that used by Ó Carragáin will be numerous in their frames of reference,

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[39] See Orton.

[40] His discussion of Ruthwell has often been taken in relation with Bewcastle: see É. Ó Carragáin, 'Liturgical Innovations associated with Pope Sergius and the iconography of the Ruthwell and Bewcastle Crosses' in *Bede and Anglo-Saxon England*, R.T. Farrell (ed.) B.A.R. 46 (1978), pp. 131-47; Id., 'Christ over the beasts and the Agnus Dei: two multivalent panels on the Ruthwell and Bewcastle Crosses' in *Sources of Anglo-Saxon culture*, P. Szarmach (ed.), Kalamazoo 1986, pp. 377-403; Id., 'A liturgical interpretation of the Bewcastle Cross' in *Medieval Literature and Antiquities: studies in honour of Basil Cottle*, M. Stokes&T. Burton (eds), Cambridge 1987, pp. 15-42; É. Ó Carragáin & J. Hawkes, with R. Trench-Jellicoe, 'John the Baptist and the Agnus Dei: Ruthwell (and Bewcastle) Revisited' in *The Antiquaries Journal* 81 (2001), pp. 131-53.

[41] The Ruthwell cross is unique in this respect, as it is a large and complex Anglo-Saxon carved monument displaying, both in runes and Latin script, an equally complex literary text.

including issues such as location, patronage, audience, impact on the landscape, politics, technical skills, supply of materials, to mention only a few.

Nevertheless, even when the iconographic programmes of the monuments and their cultural milieu are prioritised, some questions still remain unasked, or unanswered, especially when different monuments are analysed together. Why were these monuments erected? And what was their function? How much can be gleaned from their decoration, and how much remains elusive? These and other questions form the main focus of Jane Hawkes' scholarship: a pupil of Bailey and like Ó Carragáin initially a literary scholar, her work is imbued with the attention to detail, the descriptive thoroughness and the archaeological awareness of Bailey, while like Ó Carragáin she draws on the knowledge and understanding of contemporary Anglo-Saxon textual sources which were constantly used and referred to for inspiration in the production of the monuments.[42] Despite these qualities shared with Bailey and Ó Carragáin, and her collaboration with the Corpus project,[43] it is worth underlining other aspects of Hawkes' scholarship: her focus on pre-Viking sculpture, her art historical rather than archaeological disciplinary approach, and, most importantly, the constant interest in the impact of classical and late antique art on her understanding of Anglo-Saxon sculpture, and art generally.[44] This has led to the situating of Anglo-Saxon art, architecture and sculpture in a context of historical *continuum*, of circular and cyclical influences and strands of inspirations, rather than attempting a comparatively simplistic and schematic division in clearly dated periods and stages. Thus, on one hand each monument (or group of monuments) and artist (or workshop) can be assessed and appreciated in their

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[42] For instance, J. Hawkes, 'Sacraments in Stone: The Mysteries of Christ in Anglo-Saxon Sculpture', in *The Cross Goes North. Processes of conversion in northern Europe, AD 300-1300*, M. Carver (ed.), Woodbridge 2003, pp. 351-70; Id., 'Gregory the Great and Angelic Mediation'.

[43] Hawkes is editor, with P. Sidebottom, of vol. 10 of the CASSS, 'Derbyshire & Staffordshire' (in preparation).

[44] See J. Hawkes, '*Iuxta Morem Romanorum*: Stone and Sculpture in Anglo-Saxon England' in *Anglo-Saxon Styles*, C.E. Karkov & G. Hardin Brown (eds), Albany 2003, pp. 69-99; Id., 'Anglo-Saxon *Romanitas*: The Transmission and Use of Early Christian Art in Anglo-Saxon England' in *Freedom of Movement in the Middle Ages. Proceedings of the 2003 Harlaxton Symposium*, P. Horden (ed.), Donington 2007, pp. 19-36.

own right, while at the same time a picture of Anglo-Saxon monumental art in constant movement and change can be constructed, without necessarily implying a positivistic evolution.

It remains to acknowledge the fact that the iconographical approach to the study of Anglo-Saxon sculpture, or art generally, has often been questioned, in particular for the difficulties inherent in the identification of the carved images. An ambiguous iconographical interpretation can undermine the whole fragile milieu of a monument, as well as create the basis for prolonged, and often unproductive, scholarly debates. A non-controversial but nevertheless telling example is offered by one of the figural carvings on the Cundall/Aldborough (North Yorkshire) cross (**Pl.133**).[45] The image is described and identified in the Corpus as the Raising of Lazarus, but this conclusion is not universally accepted and can raise a series of questions.[46] First, it seems difficult to ascertain which of the three figures in the scene could represent Christ and which Lazarus: the figure on the left is standing and his head is missing, a second figure on the same side seems to be sitting or crouching (kneeling?), while a third figure, on the right, stands under an architectural structure and seems to hold an object in his left hand. There are of course other examples of the Lazarus scene appearing both on Anglo-Saxon monuments and several Roman monuments (**Pl.134**): here Lazarus is almost always represented as swaddled in his shroud, while Christ is usually visibly touching him, either with his fingers or a wand, indicating the symbolic synthetic element of the performance of the miracle.[47] The third figure is commonly identified as Martha, crouching at the feet of Christ; however, at Cundall/Aldborough not only is difficult to ascertain

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[45] See CASSS vol. 6, pp. 93-7.

[46] Hawkes, 'Sacraments in Stone'.

[47] In Anglo-Saxon sculpture this is the type of iconography that appears on the monuments from Rothbury, Heysham and Great Glen; see J. Hawkes, 'The Rothbury Cross: An Iconographic Bricolage', in *Gesta* 35.i (1996), pp. 77-94; Id. 'Sacraments in Stone'. In Rome depictions of the Raising of Lazarus appear in catacombs (San Sebastiano; Domitilla; via Anapo), sarcophagi (Sarcophagus of Lot; Dogmatic sarcophagus) and ivory covers (like the fifth-century one from Ravenna, now at the Cathedral Treasury in Milan), the latter often later re-used and thus found in Francia or the Continent.

whether the crouching figure represents a woman, but it also seems to be sitting rather than kneeling. The supposed identification of this scene with the Raising of Lazarus fits within the overall iconographical programme of the monument, which includes Samson carrying the Gates of Gaza, and could thus convey a consistent meaning of redemption and deliverance from Sin.[48] Until a more satisfactory identification is proposed for this carving, it is possible to affirm that, regardless of the insecure understanding of the scene which as is often the case is due to the state of conservation, the Anglo-Saxon artists may well have selected what they wanted to represent on their monument, and adapted it accordingly.[49]

Another interesting and fairly obscure iconographic construction can be seen in two carvings on crosses from Dewsbury and Otley (both W. Yorkshire) (**Pl.135**), which display very similar arrangements although quite differently rendered: on both monuments, the larger figure of an angel is accompanied by a somewhat diminutive human figure to their right, crouching or kneeling and, in the case of Dewsbury, seemingly grasping the angel's knees or a scroll.[50] This scheme is generally identified with the evangelist Matthew accompanied by his symbol. However, the most recent work by Pickles has produced a series of visual associations and cogent parallels in manuscript illuminations (**Pl.136**), those depicting John prostrated before the Angel of Revelation (19:10). Nevertheless, other sources of inspiration could be brought forward, sources influential not so much in their symbolic reference, but rather in terms of the overall arrangement of the figures: namely, those portraying the donor figure, as they appear in Rome, for example on the icon of the Virgin in Santa Maria in

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[48] This interpretation does not preclude further suggestions on what the supposed Raising of Lazarus could represent (Christ and Pilate?).

[49] Hawkes, 'Sacraments in Stone'.

[50] CASSS vol. 8, pp. 62-5; 141-2; 215-9; see also J. Lang, 'The apostles in Anglo-Saxon sculpture in the age of Alcuin' in *Early Medieval Europe* 8 (1999), pp. 271-82 and Id. 'Monuments from Yorkshire in the Age of Alcuin' in *Early Deira. Archaeological studies of the East Riding in the fourth to ninth centuries AD*, H. Geake & J. Kenny (eds), Oxford 2000, pp. 109-19; Hawkes, 'Angelic Mediation'; T. Pickles, 'Angel Veneration on Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture from Dewsbury (West Yorkshire), Otley (West Yorkshire) and Halton (Lancashire): Contemplative Preachers and Pastoral Care' in *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 162 (2009), pp. 1-28.

Trastevere, or in several frescoes at Santa Maria Antiqua, for instance in the Theodotus Chapel (**Pl.137-84**).[51]

These suggestions do not dismiss the importance of the iconographical approach, but advocate caution in its academic use. Furthermore, they underline how influential the training and different perspectives of individual scholars can be in identifying potential models and their role in the production of Anglo-Saxon carvings.

6.2 Sculpture and Rome

With this in mind, a slightly different viewpoint will be presented here, one in which – building on both the iconographical approach and the prominence of classical and late antique art in the Anglo-Saxon world – Rome and *Romanitas* will be used as a lens through which to view the monuments, in an attempt to explain and reach a much fuller understanding of their complexity, while accounting for the seemingly deliberate nature of imitation and inspiration that seems to be at the forefront in the creation of Anglo-Saxon sculpture.

While most Anglo-Saxon monuments can often be understood and fully appreciated in isolation and independence from one another, it could be argued that a wish to explain a primary motive or to create a network of reasons, meanings, people behind groups of monuments, might end up resembling the impulse to establish an evolution for designs and styles seen in the early scholarship; or on the other hand, as Orton suggests, highlighting their difference, avoiding completely (and intentionally) the comparative method which is essential to a large part of art historical investigation.

Nevertheless, it has to be said that it is only through engagement with extant and established scholarship that new research can challenge and advance, often by rephrasing questions or perspectives previously outlined, in a process of constant dialogue between fresh directions and those which have already been ascertained. Here, therefore, Anglo-Saxon sculptural carvings and

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[51] See supra, ch.4.

monuments will be examined in the way they have been studied so far – according to their shape, typology and iconographic significance – but with the intention to discover and prioritize the extent to which these aspects of the material can be understood to indicate an engagement with ideas of 'Rome', and the different ways in which this could be articulated.

6.2 a) Typology/ monumental forms

With this in mind it may seem somewhat paradoxical to start an investigation of 'Romanness' with the high crosses, monuments that, more than any others, both in the scholarly and collective imagination, seem to represent the epitome of a native 'Insular' art, as they appear nowhere else but Britain and Ireland in the early Middle Ages.[52] Such a simple, geographical consideration generated, especially in late-nineteenth-and early twentieth-century scholarship, an ongoing debate about the origins of this monument form, a debate that emphasized mainly the underlying ideological concerns of cultural primacy of one geo-political area over the other.[53]

Regardless of such considerations, the most prominent features to be recognised in the appearance of these monuments – bearing in mind that this can encompass a wide variety of forms and dimensions – are their height (sometimes over 4/5m tall), the fact that they are free-standing, and usually carved on all four faces with animal, foliate, geometric interlace and/or figural images. In many cases the monuments survive only in fragmentary form; often they are not preserved in situ – although they are generally very close to the original site – and have often been subject to a degree of reconstruction. Furthermore, these monuments are normally perceived as crosses because most,

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[52] In *Fragments of History* both Orton and Wood provide continental examples which nevertheless are all from literary sources (ie. not extant monuments) and furthermore do not refer unmistakably to stone crosses.

[53] The debate is underlying the works of Collingwood, Clapham and Kendrick cited above. See also C. Nordenfalk, 'One Hundred and Fifty Years of Varying Views on the Early Insular Gospel Books', in *Ireland and Insular Art AD 500-1200*, M. Ryan (ed.), Dublin 1987, pp. 1-6 and N. Netzer, 'Style: a history of uses and abuses in the study of Insular art' in *Pattern and Purpose in Insular Art*, M. Redknap (ed.), Oxford 2001, pp. 169-77.

although not all, preserve a terminal piece of a cross-head. It is interesting to add here that, if one considers three of the most studied and possibly earliest of these monuments, the Bewcastle Cross (Cumbria),[54] the so-called Acca's Cross, Hexham,[55] and the Ruthwell Cross (Dumfries & Galloway) (**Pl.138**),[56] it appears clear that at Bewcastle the cross-head is missing, at Hexham the transom and upper cross-arm are missing, while at Ruthwell the present transom has been reconstructed.[57] This factor has stimulated a further debate, this time focusing on a supposed original non-cruciform shape of the monuments, and the suggestion that it was inspired by obelisks/pillars. As a result (following modern politically correct attitudes, or hinting at the continuing disagreement of some scholars) the crosses have often come to be defined simply as 'monuments'.[58]

Calling into question the actual form chosen for the monuments, one has to consider the monumental resonances of the obelisk/pillar form evoked by the 'crosses' of Anglo-Saxon England as more than a gratuitous scholarly exercise, as it is clear that their form can be the first and most immediate sign of Roman implications: the pillar/obelisk form is highly evocative of Roman connotations and extremely relevant in the landscape of Anglo-Saxon monuments. Indeed, such connections have been recognized and invoked in several studies,[59] although it is also useful to remember that one source of inspiration does not necessarily rule out other(s). It is also useful to note that the obelisks surviving in Rome were usually decorated only with hieroglyphics or inscriptions, rather than high-relief ornamental carvings.

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[54] Currently dated to the early-eighth century; CASSS, vol. 2, pp. 19-22, 61-73; Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, p. 36.

[55] Currently dated to around 740. CASSS, vol. 1, pp. 174-6; Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, p. 48.

[56] Currently dated to the mid-eighth century; Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, p. 36.

[57] For the 'reconstruction' of the Ruthwell cross see Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, pp. 12-58 and Orton, *Fragments of History*, pp. 32-61.

[58] The work of Orton is emblematic of this.

[59] J. Mitchell, 'The High Cross and Monastic Strategies in Eighth-century Northumbria' in *New Offerings, Ancient Treasures. Studies in Medieval Art for George Henderson,* P. Binski & W. Noel (eds), Stroud 2001, pp. 88-114.

Orton's studies, focusing on the Ruthwell and Bewcastle 'monuments', have argued that both were originally conceived as obelisks, and in doing so has provided a powerful and multifaceted context for them both. Among his observations, the historical setting and analysis of the Roman background at both sites are particularly significant, as these place the Anglo-Saxon choice of erecting the crosses within the wider discourse of the re-appropriation of a Roman fort (at Bewcastle), continuity of the Roman landscape, continuity of a possible Romano-British presence within that landscape and therefore strong implications of a political statement on the part of the Anglo-Saxon group responsible for the construction of the crosses.[60] As already demonstrated,[61] such considerations and interpretations hold true even in an ecclesiastical or religious context, despite Orton's adamance that the cross-shaped terminals of both obelisks was just a way of amending them and rendering them coherent within a (later) religious phase of patronage.[62]

Regardless of this debate, the presence of obelisks in Rome is attested and meaningful and needs to be considered when exploring Anglo-Saxon high crosses, monuments that were likely influenced in their form and significance by their Roman counterparts. At least two obelisks are mentioned in the Einsiedeln itinerary, and both with an important history and position in relation to Christian monuments. The obelisk that for a long time was thought to be placed on the original spine of the Vatican Circus was originally transported

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[60] Orton, *Fragments of History*, pp. 13-31; see also Hawkes, '*Iuxta More Romanorum*' and Id., 'The Art of the Church in ninth-century Anglo-Saxon England: the case of the Masham Column' in *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 8 (2002), pp. 337-48.

[61] See supra, ch.5.

[62] It is interesting to note that when considering the interaction between the monument and the 'poetic runes' carved on the Ruthwell cross, Orton stresses several times that the close relation between the monument inscription and the manuscript poem is solely an assumption made on the basis of 'perceived similarities' (p. 152). Only at the very end of his chapter, Orton mentions that the poetic runes on the Ruthwell 'monument' ultimately seem to contradict his vision that the monument was not a cross. C. Neuman de Vegvar has interestingly pointed out how there is no extant fragment in the Corpus of Anglo-Saxon sculpture explored so far that can be interpreted as the distinctive type of terminal, alternative to the cross-shaped one, needed to top an obelisk. See her 'Converting the Anglo-Saxon landscape: crosses and their audiences', in *Text, Image, Interpretation. Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature and its Insular Context in Honour of Éamonn Ó Carragáin*, A. Minnis & J. Roberts (eds), Turnhout 2007, p. 409.

from Alexandria of Egypt, and was only moved into its current position in the late sixteenth century: it originally stood out to the south of the Basilica, next to the centrally-planned Oratory of St Andrew (**Pl.114**). Its association with the Circus, where the martyrdom of St Peter was thought to have taken place, meant that it was probably considered by pilgrims as having a powerful commemorative and funerary connotation.[63] The same may be said of the obelisk erected by the Emperor Augustus, also an Egyptian *spolium*, positioned to function as the gnomon of a colossal sundial in relation with two further monuments associated with the Emperor: the *Ara Pacis* and his *Mausoleum* (again a centrally-planned structure) (**Pl.139**).[64] This obelisk, still visible in the early Middle Ages and close to the via Lata, where a *diaconia* was situated,[65] had a strong imperial setting, combined with funerary and commemorative functions, but also with the practical and symbolic aspects of telling time. This has been especially emphasized by Orton, in his discussion of the Bewcastle cross, which preserves a unique sundial carved on its south face (**Pl.140**).[66] Current interpretations understand the Bewcastle sundial as linked with the communal, monastic practice of the liturgical hours,[67] but this can also imply its possible simultaneous use by a wider audience of an agrarian nature, suggesting readings based on the rhythm of the seasons, the penitential or stational practices associated with it, and also a potential apotropaic function

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[63] According to the later history of the obelisk, it was believed to preserve the ashes of Julius Caesar. See J. Osborne, 'St Peter's Needle and the ashes of Julius Caesar: invoking Rome's imperial history at the papal court, ca. 1100-1300' in *Julius Caesar in Western Culture*, M. Wyke (ed.), Oxford, 2006, pp. 95-109. Another obelisk had been transported and erected at the centre of the Circus Maximus by Constantine and his son Constantius II, see Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital*, pp. 246-51.

[64] A plain Roman obelisk survives at Arles, France: erected in the fourth century by the Emperor Constantine, it is thought to have survived as the *spina* of the Roman circus at least until the sixth century. It is thus possible that it was visually available to, or its existence was known by, Anglo-Saxons.

[65] See supra, ch.3.

[66] CASSS vol. 2, pp. 19-22; Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, pp. 36 and 46-7; Orton, *Fragments of History*, pp. 131-43.

[67] Orton, *Fragments of History*, p. 134.

against adverse meteorological conditions, an issue immediately grasped within a primarily rural environment.[68]

The obelisk-hypothesis has also raised questions about the impact of Roman visual culture on Anglo-Saxon crosses more generally, particularly in relation to other monumental forms. Until recently, the debate on the high-crosses has so strongly polarized scholarly attention, that the distinctive forms of the Anglo-Saxon monuments, squared (crosses/obelisks) and circular (columns), and their significance have not been sufficiently underlined. Moreover, the most significant observation, the fact that the column form seems to be absolutely unique to Anglo-Saxon England, has been almost completely ignored.[69] An example of this attitude is found in Collingwood's interpretation of the early ninth-century monument at Dewsbury (**Pl.141**). [70] Here, Collingwood reconstructed several fragments, with round and square/tapering sections, into a single 'high-cross type' monument, one of staggering height, with a round shaft that continued in a square-section shaft, culminating in a cross-head.[71] It is now accepted that the fragments belong to as many as three different monuments, and that one of them was a column at least two meters tall.[72] During Collingwood's time the high-cross enjoyed such prominence that a columnar monument could exist, function and be properly interpreted only as part of a 'native' high-cross form. On the contrary, columns seem to have been an integral part of the Anglo-Saxon artistic production, and they fully exploit conceptual links with Rome, from both a classical and Christian point of view. The early-ninth-century fragments from Dewsbury and Reculver and the still standing, but incomplete and badly weathered, column of the same date at

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[68] Neuman de Vegvar, 'Converting the Anglo-Saxon landscape'; see also infra pp. 304-5.

[69] J. Hawkes, 'The Legacy of Constantine in Anglo-Saxon England', in *Constantine the Great: York's Roman Emperor*, E. Hartley, J. Hawkes & M. Henig (eds), London 2006, p. 109.

[70] Collingwood, *Northumbrian Crosses*, p. 7; Hawkes, 'The Art of the Church', pp. 343-4.

[71] Collingwood could have been influenced by monuments like Gosforth, where the motivations for such a shape are fairly different.

[72] See CASSS, vol. 8, pp. 129-39.

Masham (N. Yorkshire) represent three such monuments (**Pl.142-143-144-145**).[73] While postponing for the time being discussion of their decoration, and its layout – both integral elements to their 'columnar' form and used in such a way as to emphasize the form itself – it is important here to remember the often repeated, but still relevant connection to Roman triumphal columns.

These highly visible and symbolic monuments, expressions of imperial military triumph and power, still tower above the Forum in Rome, and in the early Middle Ages probably functioned as signposts, as mentioned in the Einsiedeln itinerary.[74] The columns of Trajan (completed in 113 AD) and Marcus Aurelius (*c*.176-193 AD) were carved with images from their military campaigns so as to create a continuous spiralling register running the length of the shaft (**Pl.146**). In 608 another column, not carved but fluted, was re-dedicated in honour of the Emperor Phocas after he visited Rome, and probably re-erected in the central location of the Roman Forum where it still stands today (**Pl.146**) – in close proximity to the church of Santa Maria Antiqua – by the Hexarch of Ravenna, Smaragdus (who had been reinstated to his position by the Emperor) and adorned with a gilded statue of Phocas himself.[75]

Apart from the free-standing triumphal columns, other influential examples of architectural sculpture can also be taken into account: the most important were probably the carved spiral columns supporting the structure covering the tomb of St Peter in the eponymous saint's basilica. Within this canopy erected by Constantine and remodelled, first by Gregory the Great, and then by Gregory III (731-41), the columns came to have an almost mythical status, being considered *spolia* from the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. This association was undoubtedly enhanced by their physical and symbolic proximity with the tomb of the Apostle. A similar structure covered the altar at

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[73] See CASSS, vol. 4, pp. 46-61, 151-61 and vol. 6, pp. 168-74; R. Kozodoy, 'The Reculver Cross', in *Archaeologia* 108 (1986), pp. 67-94; Hawkes, 'The Art of the Church'; Id., 'The Legacy of Constantine'; Id., 'The Church Triumphant: The Figural Columns of Early Ninth-century Anglo-Saxon England' in *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 16 (2009), pp. 31-44.

[74] Supra, pp. 75-8.

[75] A. Claridge, *Rome: an Oxford archaeological guide to Rome*, Oxford 1998, pp. 84-5.

the church of San Clemente, built under Pope Ormisdas (514-23): two of its columns, completely carved with thick foliate ornamentation, survive today, reused in a fifteenth-century funerary monument within the same church (**Pl.25**).[76]

Outside Rome, other significant connections with columns can be seen, that carry with their specific monumental form particularly powerful associations. Three of these were further linked with Constantine: the porphyry column erected by him in Constantinople[77] and two monuments in Jerusalem, a column topped by a golden cross surmounting the roof of the Anastasis and a second column, close to the Holy Sepulchre, which was traditionally thought to be set in the 'centre of the earth'.[78] The so-called Jupiter columns could also have had a role in inspiring Anglo-Saxon artists: these columns were smaller in dimension – at least when compared to the Roman triumphal ones that reached almost 40m in height – and were widespread across the territory of the North Western Empire, possibly 'to invoke protection against adverse weather and elemental catastrophe'.[79] At least three of them are known from Roman Britain[80] and, in terms of appearance, they combined a round shaft carved with foliate and figural ornament: they were topped by a statue of Jupiter, just as the triumphal columns terminated with a statue of the Emperor. This provides a precedent for the suggestion that even Anglo-Saxon columns could terminate with a different object (a cross): at Masham, the only example where the column survives standing albeit incomplete, the presence of a mortise hole at the top of the terminal drum indicates a further missing structural element that would

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[76] See supra, p. 44.

[77] See G. Fowden, 'Constantine's porphyry column: the earliest literary allusion', in *The Journal of Roman Studies* 81 (1991), pp. 119-31.

[78] The Jerusalem monuments could have been familiar to the Anglo-Saxons from the description in Adamnan's D*e Locis Sanctis* (D. Meehan ed., Dublin 1958), chapt. 2.7 (pp. 44-5) and chapt. 11 (pp. 56-7).

[79] Mitchell, 'The High Cross', p. 91.

[80] From Cirencester, Catterick and Wroxeter. On Jupiter Columns see J.M.C. Toynbee, *Art in Britain under the Romans*, Oxford 1964, pp. 144-7; Mitchell, , 'The High Cross', pp. 91-3; Hawkes, 'The Church Triumphant' , esp. p. 40 and related fns.

have continued and completed the monument.[81] Although brief, this survey indicates how each element of an Anglo-Saxon monument, in this case the columnar form chosen for it, can reveal the synthesis and multiple existence of several different models, both in its origin and in the way it could be perceived by an audience, thus being stimulated to explore different solutions and interpretations on the basis of their experiences and backgrounds.

Regardless of origin, function, inspiration or patronage, the form of these monuments seems to suggest a highly visible and often public status, one that could be further enhanced by the use of paint and metalwork fittings that would have underlined their affiliation with jewelled, processional crosses. Scholarly interpretations of obelisks, columns and crosses vary from a purely monastic setting with a primarily liturgical function (as Ó Carragáin has argued for Ruthwell),[82] to a more generic ecclesiastical-priestly context in which the crosses stated the communities' interest in pastoral care and preaching (Lang's 'Apostle's Pillars'),[83] to an emphasis on aristocratic patronage with military, political and commemorative associations (Orton on Bewcastle).[84] While Orton's claim to 'define the surviving fragments of Anglo-Saxon sculpture by form and not by functions'[85] has nevertheless resulted in his frequent linking a specific function or interpretation to the (supposed) form of a monument, it is important here to underline that any monument-form and its suggested patronage and function were not mutually exclusive concepts and that, once again, the possible co-existence of a multiplicity of perceptions and uses for these crosses cannot be emphasised enough. Separating the concepts of high cross, obelisk and column with regard to Anglo-Saxon monument-forms means dismissing the Anglo-Saxon tendency to combine the inspiration drawn from

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[81] Fragments of a cross head and arm have been found at Masham and deemed consistent with (part of) the column, see CASSS, vol. 6, pp. 168-9, 173-4.
[82] Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*.
[83] Lang, 'The Apostles'; Id. 'Monuments from Yorkshire'
[84] Orton, *Fragment of History*.
[85] Ibid., p. 80.

different sources into something new, as it has been demonstrated for the concept of 'porticus' in Anglo-Saxon church-architecture.[86]

Furthermore, given that the landscape setting of the few monuments that are still *in situ* has substantially changed and that most are not in their original position, it is difficult to recreate a plausible picture of how they were used. Nevertheless, even when enclosed within a monastic setting, the presence of a non-monastic audience has to be taken into account; and *vice-versa*: where a non-ecclesiastical patronage can be proposed, the iconography is usually of a mixed nature, so that the crosses can still be understood as the foci of religious practices or audiences. And, where the Anglo-Saxon sculpture has been preserved within a church, or it is deemed to have once stood within such surroundings, the audience would have still been composed of different groups, with different awareness and responses to the images portrayed.[87] Ultimately, the new frontier in the study of Anglo-Saxon sculpture is probably the one that puts at the forefront questions of audience (even more than questions of patronage).

A third Anglo-Saxon monumental form that can boast a strong relation to the Roman world is the sarcophagus. Actual Roman (Late Antique) sarcophagi were in existence in Anglo-Saxon England, and there are a number of instances in which Roman pieces were re-used.[88] A very telling example of this practice can be found in the story of St Cuthbert whose body was initially buried, at his own request, in a stone coffin that had been presented to him by Abbot Cudda.[89] It is not possible to determine if it was a genuine Roman piece, or one carved in Anglo-Saxon England, but it is undoubtedly notable that a stone

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[86] See supra, pp. 209-15.

[87] Hawkes, 'Sacraments in Stone', pp. 213-5.

[88] In all likelihood a Roman sarcophagus was used for King Sebbi of the East Saxons (HE, IV.11, pp. 364-9, 'cuius corpora tumulando praeparaverunt sarcofagum lapideum'); and for Queen Etheldreda, who was first buried in a wooden coffin and subsequently translated into the church in a stone sarcophagus, said to have been found close to the city walls of Grantchester (HE, IV.19, pp. 390-7, 'et mox invenerunt iuxta muros civitatis locellum de marmore albo pulcherrime factum, operculo quoque similis lapidis aptissime tectum').

[89] Bede, *Vita Cuthberti*, ch. 37, p. 272: 'est autem ad aquilonalem eiusdem oratorii partem sarcophagum terrae cespite abditum, quod olim mihi Cudda venerabilis abbas donavit'.

sarcophagus was considered a fitting gift for a Bishop. If Cuthbert's first coffin was indeed Roman, as is generally accepted, it could be further suggested that the decoration of the second 'light coffin' produced a few years later – in all probability the engraved, wooden one, the fragments of which are reconstructed and preserved at Durham Cathedral – could have been inspired by that of the previous Roman sarcophagus.[90]

In Rome itself sarcophagi were a very prominent element in the extra-mural basilicas: the imperial porphyry sarcophagi at the *Mausolea* of Sant'Elena and Santa Costanza (**Pl.147**) were kept *in situ* throughout the Middle Ages and it is possible that they were seen by and influenced the visual experience of Anglo-Saxon visitors. The sarcophagus of Giunio Basso (**Pl.148**),[91] one of the finest examples of early Christian sarcophagi, was probably carved when the Constantinian church of St Peter was already in existence and thus was always on site. It is decorated with scenes on two superimposed registers, and in this light, it is interesting to note that the Apostles depicted on one of the long sides of Cuthbert's wooden coffin are also arranged in two tiers.

There are several other examples of Anglo-Saxon sculpture that can provide some indication of the influence of the sarcophagus form. The early ninth-century carved panel from Hovingham, (E. Yorkshire) (**Pl.149**) was probably part of a shrine, but its form and the choice of iconography point strongly to its association with a sarcophagus, regardless of whether it contained a coffin or tomb, or even secondary relics.[92] The so-called Hedda Stone, kept at Peterborough Cathedral, (Cambridgeshire) has been defined as a

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[90] See C.F. Battiscombe, *The Relics of St Cuthbert*, Oxford 1956; *St Cuthbert, his Cult and his Community*, G. Bonner (ed.), Woodbridge 1989. It is possible as well that, after Cuthbert's relics were transferred to the new, 'light' coffin, the body of his successor, Bishop Eadbert, who died not long after the translation, was placed in Cuthbert's tomb: whether this means he was placed in the grave, or that the previous stone sarcophagus was reused, it is not possible to say.

[91] Now preserved in the Treasury of the Basilica Vaticana.

[92] CASSS, vol. 3, pp. 146-7; 'Mary and the Cycle of Resurrection: the Iconography of the Hovingham Panel', in *The Age of Migrating Ideas. Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland*, R.M. Spearman & J. Higgitt (eds), Edinburgh 1993, pp. 254-67.

'solid stone shrine' (**Pl.149**).[93] Although the pitched roof and fairly narrow proportion indicate a connection with metalwork reliquaries, the form of the monument strongly suggests its descent from the Roman sarcophagus, an affiliation enhanced by the choice and layout of ornamentation. Further Anglo-Saxon examples of this Roman-inspired monument form can be found at Wirksworth, (Derbyshire) (**Pl.149**): here, a stone panel with complex figural carvings has been correctly identified with the coped lid of a sarcophagus or shrine, a monument probably dated to the late eighth-century and surely significant, which was kept and venerated within a church.[94] In addition, the ninth century monolithic sarcophagus found in the excavations of the Church of St Alkmund, Derby, gives rise to some interesting observations. Unlike the examples provided so far, the St Alkmund sarcophagus presents a non-figural decoration; regardless of this, it was in all probability, like all the above-mentioned monuments, the focus of an important cult, placed in all likelihood in a very visible position within the Anglo-Saxon church, just like its Roman counterparts.[95]

6.2 b) Layout of decoration

As much as the form chosen for Anglo-Saxon monuments can betray multiple and substantial Roman inspirations, so the layout chosen for their decoration can also convey a sense of 'Romaness'. This is particularly evident when taking into account the columnar form: at Masham especially (**Pl.145**), where the column is intact, the carvings were arranged in registers, the carved figures being contained in arcades, and the registers themselves, although not

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[93] R. Cramp, 'Schools of Mercian sculpture' in *Mercian Studies*, A. Dornier (ed.), Leicester 1977, p. 210;Lang, *Anglo-Saxon Sculpture*, pp. 12-3 and 36-7.

[94] J. Hawkes, 'The Wirksworth Slab: an iconography of Humilitas' in *Peritia* 9 (1995), pp. 246-77; the fact that only the lid survives may suggest that the actual body of the stone coffin could have been undecorated, or possibly not meant to be seen.

[95] See C.A.R. Radford, 'The Church of Saint Alkmund, Derby' in *The Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* 96 (1976), pp. 26-61. The condition in which the St Alkmund sarcophagus was found suggests a parallel with the recent find of the Lichfield Angel panel, within Lichfield Cathedral.

following a spiralling pattern like on the paradigmatic Trajan's Column,[96] are set 'so that the pillars of the arcade of the register above align with the arch below'.[97] This contributes to the sense of rotation conveyed by the decoration of the monument, being completely coherent and appropriate to a round shaft.[98]

It is possible that a similar arrangement was also used in the layout of the decoration on the Reculver and Dewsbury columns, but the nature of the extant fragments makes a hypothetical reconstruction very difficult. Nevertheless, at Reculver it seems that registers in which the figures were set in rectangular niches and framed by columns, alternated with figures encircled in a vegetal scroll and separated within their registers by interlace borders (**Pl.142-144**). It is also possible that some of the scenes carved on this column were set more freely, taking up the space of more than one corresponding niche in the registers above and below or even occupying more than one register.[99]

Understandably, the layout of the decoration of the Anglo-Saxon sarcophagi and funerary monuments also preserves a strong Roman setting: at both Hovingham and Peterborough (**Pl.149**), the figural carvings are regularly arranged under classical-looking arcades, with a strong resemblance, for example, with the late-fourth century sarcophagus of Probo (**Pl.150**). Furthermore, the framed figures on the Hovingham panel do not function in isolation, but are combined in narrative sub-units that bisect the individual arcades, with the characters performing actions that carry across the apparent

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[96] Although the carvings on the Trajan's column are not framed by arcades.

[97] CASSS vol. 6, p. 169.

[98] The same setting can be observed on the four alabaster columns supporting the thirteenth-century ciborium. Scholarly debate on the origin and dating of the re-used columns has not reached a unanimous opinion, but they are in all likelihood of Byzantine origin and datable to the turn of the sixth century; see Lang, 'Monuments from Yorkshire', p. 113 and also http://www.basilicasanmarco.it/ita/basilica_scult/ciborio_appr.bsm?cat=1&subcat=3 (accessed May 2010).

[99] See Kozodoi, 'The Reculver Cross', and the alternative interpretations in CASSS and Hawkes; the reconstruction of the column in Kozodoi remains a useful example of a possible layout. The arrangement of the scenes on the Dewsbury column seems more difficult to reconstruct: the arcading survives on one fragment that preserves elements from two superimposed registers of decoration. The lower register is the arcaded one and the figures on the upper one seem to physically rest with their feet on the arcade itself.

(de)limitation provided by the columnar framing: the same method is similarly used in Roman Late Antique sarcophagi (**Pl.150**).

At Peterborough, instead, the figures stand static under the architectural framing. This type of framed but more iconic layout can be observed in several Anglo-Saxon stone monuments: it does not presuppose their arrangement in registers, nor does it rely on the shape of the framing, but it is emphasized by the act of framing itself, isolating the figures which are thus presented in single, independent panels. Considering at this point the layout only, and not the style or the iconography of the decoration, an example worthy of note has been preserved from the top of the cross at Rothbury (Northumberland), where the crisp carving of Christ in Majesty is contained within a thick round arch emphasized by double-ribbed terminals (**Pl.151**).[100] Here, the act of framing the carvings is far from a mere technical device: rather, the composition and layout of the decoration affects the iconography, thus revealing conscious choices being made between several available options. For instance, the much-discussed representation of Christ in Majesty portrayed (*pace* Orton)[101] with very obvious similarity on the Bewcastle and Ruthwell crosses (**Pl.152**) is enclosed in very different framing: an arched panel for the Bewcastle figure (repeated also for the 'falconer' image just below) and a square border for the Ruthwell Christ. Furthermore, at Bewcastle the awareness of the sculptor's decision is emphasized by the figure just above the Christ in Majesty, placed instead within a square frame (**Pl.138**). Regardless of the shapes of the architectural framing illustrated by the various layouts of Anglo-Saxon monumental decoration – although different shapes might hint at different sources of inspiration – it is the act of framing itself which creates a powerful connection and affiliation with Roman models.

With this in mind it can be suggested that, while Late-Antique sarcophagi may have provided a long-lasting source of inspiration for the framing of

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[100] See CASSS vol.1, pp. 217-22 and Hawkes, 'The Rothbury Cross'.

[101] Orton, *Fragment of History,* pp. 84-96.

carved decoration, the various arrangements of figures portrayed in the wood panels of the fifth-century doors of the church of Santa Sabina are also worth noting (**Pl.153**).[102] Here, each board has autonomy: some have scenes arranged on multiple superimposed registers, often separated with plain, symbolic planes in terms of the composition, but not of narrative action, which runs continuously, depicting different moments of the same event. In other scenes the narrative separation is obtained through elements of the landscape, in a less artificial manner; one panel depicts Christ within a circular frame while the scene immediately below is enclosed under an arched line, probably symbolizing the sky. The possible connection of an arched framing with the vault of Heaven adds another influential element of interpretation that combines visual similarity with powerful meaning: the apse mosaics in the majority of the most important early medieval churches in Rome represented the figures of Christ, Saints and Apostles contained within a half-dome, often realistically representing the sky and also frequently outlined, almost to emphasize the arched frame bordering the composition.[103] It is not impossible that in using this kind of layout for much of their figural sculpture, Anglo-Saxon artists wanted to synthetically allude to this architectural legacy, bridging with authentic creativity any difficulty born of the differences in the use of media and in the location of the decoration itself.[104]

Following these significant associations, it is important to mention another source of inspiration: in the catacombs, so frequently visited by Anglo-Saxon pilgrims,[105] a large part of the frescoes are located within the *arcosolia* (tombs within arched recesses); they are thus associated with a characteristic shape

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[102] See Brandenburg, p. 177, which also provides full bibliographical details on Santa Sabina and its doors; also A.E. Sheckler & M.J.W. Leith, 'The Crucifixion Conundrum and the Santa Sabina Doors' in *Harvard Theological Review* 103 (2010), pp. 67-88.

[103] Examples are at Santa Costanza, SS Cosma e Damiano, SS Pudenziana, Sant'Agata dei Goti.

[104] A. Gannon, 'Coins and Icons, Christ and the Virgin', paper delivered at the Leeds International Medieval Congress, July 2008. Here, she underlined how, in Anglo-Saxon coinage, the representation of a human figure interpreted as being on a 'boat' recalls strikingly an apse-line. The 'lunetta' on the coin could hint very synthetically to a predominantly Roman architectural feature.

[105] See supra, ch.2.

which is often further underlined by a painted outline. In addition, larger, icon-like fresco panels with individual figures or groups, like the St Luke image at Commodilla, or the enthroned 'Madonna di Turtura' in the same catacomb, or the widely discussed frescoes in the catacomb of Ponziano and in the church of Santa Maria Antiqua (**Pl.42-43-48-78**), are always presented within a thick, squared, coloured painted outline, so that the iconic force of such images is equally conveyed and enhanced by the framing. A similar layout can be observed in mosaic decoration, where the framing of the scenes is often obtained with decorated bands, as in the Chapel of San Venanzio (Lateran Baptistery), or on the intrados of the triumphal arch in the basilica of San Lorenzo fuori le mura (**Pl.154**). Such visual suggestions and implications, albeit often pertaining to the architectural setting of frescoes or mosaics, may nevertheless have considerably influenced the layout of ornament on Anglo-Saxon sculpture.

6.2 c) Style

The concept of 'classical' applied to the Roman inspiration in the form of a monument or the layout of its decoration have led scholars to consider another essential aspect of sculpture which can be understood as contributing to the creation of a 'classical' work of art: namely, 'style'. As noted, this is a loaded term in the study of art history, and its use has been met, especially in more recent times, with a growing degree of suspicion and controversy; currently style forms the focus of a study undertaken by Denton in relation to Anglo-Saxon art in general, and the sculpture in particular.[106] Generally speaking, stylistic studies have come to be held in low regard as they have often been

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[106] See J. Osborne, 'The artistic culture of early medieval Rome: a research agenda for the 21st century' in *Settimane del CISAM* 48 (2001), pp. 693-711; J. Hawkes, 'Through a Glass Darkly: Re-visualizing Rome in Anglo-Saxon Sculpture', paper delivered at the Conference 'Ex Changes. Rome Across Time and Space: Cultural Transmission and reception of Ideas (c. 400-1400)', Cambridge, July 2008; Orton, *Fragments of History,* pp. 62-80. The debate on style in Late Antique/Early Medieval Rome has focused for a long time on the conflict between a naturalistic, 'Hellenistic' wave or school and a more iconic, symbolic or impressionistic one; see supra, ch.4.

identified with a focus on the modes or manner of representing motifs within a specific and 'labelled' style. As mentioned, this particular approach has been frequently motivated by an underlying intention to classify and date the works of art, or establish an evolutionary trend within the art of certain periods or geographical areas.[107] Regardless of the fact that the mere concept of style in an art historical context is reputed to be 'fraught with seemingly insoluble difficulties',[108] style can be used, if only within a much wider scope, as a way to convey specific meanings, or to illustrate and support issues of a political, social and cultural nature. This is particularly true when considering the 'Romanness' in the style of Anglo-Saxon sculpture and the potential meanings that it tends to convey.

The existence and importance of a distinctively Roman element in the style of Anglo-Saxon sculpture can thus be approached taking into account both the style of the arrangement and presentation of the carved scenes, as well as the style in which those figures are depicted within the scenes. In this manner, two different trends can be generally identified: an iconic style, in which few figures, often with a central, static focus, are rendered in a symbolic, hierarchical and two-dimensional manner; and a more narrative or naturalistic style, in which scenes with more figures often coincide also with a more modelled, corporeal and natural depiction of the figures. It is necessary to bear in mind though that, within this general and fairly schematic framework, the relationship between Anglo-Saxon sculpture and Roman influence can almost always be seen not in terms of slavish copying, but more as a reinterpretation, imitation and reworking, within different value systems, different landscapes, different media,

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[107] Exemplary in this respect is the work by E. Kitzinger extensively discussed in chapter 4. Orton is particularly susceptible to the flaws of style analysis, while Osborne has invoked caution in the use of style and underlined its limits especially in relation to early medieval Rome. Hawkes has demonstrated how it is indeed the use (or misuse) of style in the study of Anglo-Saxon sculpture that has created a huge scholarly debate within the disciplines of Art History and Archaeology. See previous footnote for bibliographical references. More recently the work of Amanda Denton is proposing a new way to look at an Anglo-Saxon sense of style, see supra fn. 1.

[108] Osborne, 'The Artistic culture', p. 706.

and often different functions. Yet none of these factors denies the significance of the model in triggering the initial associations, both on the part of the creator and in the eyes of the viewer of a given work of art. Furthermore, it is important to reiterate that these two main modes of articulating 'style' do not represent or imply progress or evolution from one to another: their perceived differences do not preclude their simultaneous use, and it is possible to see this both in Rome as well as Anglo-Saxon England, where the two styles are often more coexisting than conflicting or competing, in an effective combination that can be displayed even on a single monument.[109] Finally, it is also essential to observe how the artistic influences did not always move from the outside (Rome or the Continent) into the Anglo-Saxon melting-pot, but were also transmitted the other way round, following the distinctive transformation that can be termed 'Anglo-Saxon style'.[110]

This suggestion, as well as the tendency to 'mix and match', can be illustrated by a monument in Gaul that betrays close associations with both Roman and Anglo-Saxon art. Agilbert's sarcophagus at Jouarre (**Pl.155**),[111] dated to the seventh century, seems to present a unique example of Late Antique Continental influences combined with Anglo-Saxon ones in a way that demonstrates that the paths of models and artistic impact did not necessarily always run in a single direction across the Channel – as is often taken for granted – but could also work in more complex cross-cultural ways. On the sarcophagus, the *orans* figures on the side panel present an admix of symbolic representation and a 'classical', naturalistic Late Antique plasticity in the rendition of the figures, which can be compared with the figural style found, for instance, in early catacomb paintings. On the end panel of the sarcophagus, however, the *Majestas* in the *mandorla* seems to be more closely paralleled by

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[109] A typical example of this can be found in the frescoes of Santa Maria Antiqua, discussed in ch.4.

[110] Denton, *An Anglo-Saxon Theory of Style*.

[111] J. Hubert - J. Porcher – W.F. Volbach, *L'Europe des invasions*, Paris 1967, English translation by S. Gilbert& J. Emmons, *Europe in the Dark Ages*, London 1969, pp. 64-77.

carvings in Anglo-Saxon England, and it is in fact the only example of figural sculpture expressed in this way in the sculpture of post-Roman Gaul. This is not to say that Continental, Frankish art did not play a part in the production of figural sculpture in Anglo-Saxon England, but to suggest that such influences can be overrated and invoked, *deus ex machina*, to explain or interpret similar phenomena in Anglo-Saxon England. The world of early medieval art was one of communication, travel and mutual exchange, imitation and adaptation.

In this respect it is worth noting that Orton's view of style – which emphasises the use and misuse of style and the art historian's inclination to see every 'object in relation to other objects and emphasise formal and technical matters' – demonstrates no awareness that several types of object and various styles were available to Anglo-Saxon artists.[112] Indeed, current work by Denton shows that the Anglo-Saxons were not living in a vacuum, but were fully aware of the potential political, religious and symbolic implications of any such style, and chose to use them accordingly.[113]

Turning to consider the Anglo-Saxon sculpture in more detail, in the light of Roman stylistic influences, it is possible to demonstrate a willingness to convey *Romanitas* in the arrangement of the figures and their rendition, in the symbolic and two-dimensional as well as in the naturalistic and classical 'styles'. By definition, the iconic arrangement – as often noted – presupposes the isolation of the figure, so that in turn it becomes not just a representation of someone or something, but a means of expressing deeper meanings while simultaneously acting as a tool of prayer and meditation. This is usually achieved with scenes in which the decorated space is occupied by rarefied, light-weight and symbolic images, and the figures are often portrayed as suspended in space. Examples of this can be seen in the mosaic on the triumphal arch of San Lorenzo fuori le mura, or the apse-mosaic at Sant'Agnese

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[112] Orton, *Fragments of History*, p. 64.
[113] Denton, *An Anglo-Saxon Theory of Style*.

(**Pl.58**).[114] Other Roman examples appear on some of the earlier frescoes at Santa Maria Antiqua, such as the portrait of Theodore, and in catacomb frescoes (**Pl.72-74**). Moreover, the iconic arrangement can often be the result of abbreviated versions of a more narrative/naturalistic style: such interplay between a classical, narrative, realistic composition and a more stylized one can obviously be observed in Rome. Here, especially in apse mosaics and catacomb frescoes, there seems to be a shift from images displaying a combination of many figures, often with a processional, narrative, convivial and 'classical' nature, to a more simple composition, featuring only a selection of figures. Such a transition can be observed in Rome in the apse-mosaic of Santa Pudenziana or in the catacomb fresco of SS Marcellino e Pietro (**Pl.19-44**), while the more iconic arrangement appears prominently in the above-cited examples of San Lorenzo and Sant'Agnese. It is important to remember that the choice of figures to be represented was often determined by circumstances, such as the need to include the eponymous saints or martyrs: this had the advantage of leaving the composition somehow open and subject to be freely adapted or imitated, sometimes in a more or less abbreviated manner.[115]

In the realm of Anglo-Saxon sculpture, a similar process of 'shortening' a narrative arrangement into a more iconic one can be observed in the carvings on the cross-shaft at Easby (N. Yorkshire)[116]: the figure of Christ enthroned flanked by two apostles(?), albeit convincingly juxtaposed to a sixth-century ivory from Constantinople (**Pl.156**),[117] could recall a compressed version of the *Traditio Legis/Pacis* as it appears at Santa Costanza (**Pl.14-15**), or in the even more traditional compositions of the apse mosaics at St Peter's, S. Paolo fuori le mura, Santa Pudenziana or SS Cosma e Damiano (**Pl.16-17-19-58**). Indeed, it is interesting to note that the lower panels of the Easby cross contain two groups of apostles/evangelists, all closely packed together (**Pl.157**). These have been

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[114] Krautheimer, *Rome*, pp. 124-5.

[115] Hawkes, 'Church triumphant, p. 34.

[116] See CASSS, vol. 6, pp. 98-102.

[117] Mitchell, 'The High Cross', p. 94.

compared by Lang with the portrait busts of the apostles in roundels, as portrayed in the early ninth-century chapel of San Zeno at Santa Prassede (**Pl.157**).[118] Much larger, and earlier in date, apostles busts in roundels also appear at Santa Maria Antiqua, in the early eighth-century frescoes in the sanctuary (**Pl.74-86-87**).[119] In both cases the Roman sources of inspiration seem to have been transformed by the Anglo-Saxon artist by means of a usual, synthesizing technique, aptly applied to a different medium and spatial arrangement.

On the other hand, the narrative arrangement of a scene seems to have the potential to convey an inherently classical style with it, regardless of how the figures are rendered. This can be seen in the carvings on the Hovingham panel, in which the single sketch-like vignettes create a strong narrative sequence; or in those on the Masham column (**Pl.149-145**). The naturalistic style of the scenes seems not to be hampered by the prominent framing, a device that can often – as demonstrated – contribute towards a more iconic arrangement, probably by virtue of the isolation provided to the individual carvings by the frames themselves.[120]

Another example of how a classical style could be evoked and enhanced by the arrangement of the carvings, for which it seems even more natural to claim a Roman ancestry, can be found in the sculpture at Easby and Otley (**Pl.157-172**). Lang has invoked for these monuments one of the most poignant and binding comparisons with Roman funerary art, in particular some first-century AD stele preserved in Ravenna; indeed the parallels are so striking as to suggest almost direct imitation (**Pl.158**).[121] A similar inspiration must also be put forward for the commemorative monument at Whitchurch (Hampshire) (**Pl.159**): here, the classical-looking figure of the blessing Christ is the only figural

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[118] Lang, 'Monuments from Yorkshire', pp. 117-8.
[119] See supra, p. 165.
[120] See supra, ch.2.; it is also important to remember that there can be a spatial and compositional reason behind some of the framing in sculpture, inherently needed in relation to the medium used and the frequent vertical arrangement of most of the monuments' decoration.
[121] Lang, 'Survival and Revival', pp. 262-5.

element of the monument, carved in very deep relief and placed within an arched recess that once again calls to mind catacomb art. The wide, plain panel just below the figure could have received a painted inscription and, to make the link with Roman funerary art even more significant, there is a large Latin inscription running on the top face of the monument, carrying an epitaph with a distinctive Late Antique note in the words 'hic…requiescit in pace', a common formula in fifth- and sixth-century inscriptions.[122]

As previously noted, however, even a marked realistic and classical arrangement in Anglo-Saxon sculpture – like that at Hovingham – can simultaneously maintain a more ambiguous reading, or better, a multivalent one: the figures on the crosses from Easby or Otley combine a naturalistic stance and rendering with a further level of understanding, arising from their isolated, non-narrative arrangement, and from the interpretation of what they represent.[123] By depicting Apostles, although following a classical arrangement and figural style, the artist, and therefore the monument, instantly point to their symbolic and iconic significance.

Further examples of this duality under the general inspiration of a classical, naturalistic, narrative Roman arrangement, can be seen in two fragments of (probably) architectural sculpture at Hexham (**Pl.160**). Their origin has been debated and it is unclear if they are original Roman pieces or Anglo-Saxon imitative ones: in both cases, they were in all likelihood displayed in Wilfrid's cathedral, regardless of whether they were used as real or pretend *spolia*.[124] The fragments represent a naked (putto) archer and a scene of vintage with two small human figures, also naked, and two animals, pecking at leaves and grape bunches. A similar example, certainly Anglo-Saxon, comes from Jarrow (**Pl.161**), although here the human figure is dressed in a short tunic with

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[122] CASSS, vol. 4, pp. 271-3.
[123] On Otley see CASSS, vol. 8, pp. 215-21.
[124] On *spolia* see supra, pp. 229-233; on the sculptural pieces see R. Cramp, 'Early Northumbrian Sculpture at Hexham', in *Saint Wilfrid at Hexham*, D.P. Kirby (ed.), Newcastle 1974, pp. 115-40 and CASSS, vol. 1, pp. 185-6.

parallel, tubular folds, depicted striding across a thick plant-scroll; an animal is also entwined and gnawing at the branches. In this piece, Cramp observed how the depiction of a 'classical hunting scene' coexists with a Christian interpretation of the struggle of man against the forces of evil, probably represented by the animal.[125] These Anglo-Saxon carvings offer a strong visual connection with the narrative arrangement and rendering of Roman funerary art, expressed at best by the scenes in the vault mosaics in the mausoleum of Santa Costanza, the imperial porphyry sarcophagus also preserved there, or the sarcophagus 'of the Three Shepherds', all dated to the mid-fourth century (**Pl.13-147-162**). A sarcophagus of a slightly later date, now in the porch of the Basilica of San Lorenzo also portrays a pastoral vintage scene, although here it is carved in very low relief. Nevertheless, regardless of the classical, naturalistic arrangement of the scenes, they also convey a certain degree of symbolic significance, linked to the interpretation of Jesus as the Bread of Life (John 6:47-59), the Good Shepherd (John 10) and the True Vine (John 16).

As already noted, the iconic arrangement focuses on the isolated, non-narrative nature of the figures within scenes which are often evocative of something more than just the depiction of a story. In addition, these isolated figures are usually rendered in a non-realistic way, a way in which the corporeity is flattened into two-dimensions, or where modelled, naturalistic details are distorted in order to point to a more symbolical interpretation, beyond their immediate meaning. This style seems almost to be a favourite in the carvings of Anglo-Saxon stone monuments, and there are a number of examples. The Christ in Majesty on the late-eighth century Rothbury cross, for instance (**Pl.151**), is depicted with deeply drilled eyes and enlarged hands, with the fingers pointing at the (Gospel) book.[126] A similar, flat and symbolic stance can be noted in the figures of the martyrs in the 'Madonna di Turtura' fresco at the catacomb of Commodilla, in which the patron of the fresco also displays

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[125] Cramp, *Wearmouth and Jarrow,* vol. 2, p. 179.
[126] Hawkes, 'The Rothbury Cross', pp. 80-1.

large, prominent eyes, as well as in the representations of the 'Ecclesia' figures on the surviving mosaic of Santa Sabina (**Pl.43-163**).[127]

Furthermore, at Rothbury, although deeply modelled, the Christ figure is static and symbolic, an aspect enhanced by the emphasis on his gesture of pointing at the book. If the symbolic interpretation is taken further, Christ's attribute – the Gospel-book – becomes identified with Christ himself; the Christ-Gospel can be understood not only as a means of triumph, salvation and redemption, but also as conveying the concepts of preaching, evangelization and orthodoxy. A similar interpretation can probably be implied also for the *Majestas* at Dewsbury (**Pl.143**), where Christ's prominent hand appears again.[128] The distinctive and deeply symbolic way in which Christ holds the Gospel book and points at it at the same time can be paralleled in Rome, in the mosaics at S. Lorenzo fuori le mura, Sant'Agnese and S. Venanzio (at the Lateran Baptistery) among others.

Finally, the iconic underlining of Christ's hand – in gestures, blessings and touch – can also be read in connection with those representations of Christ in which he is involved in miracles, or miraculous healing: in these cases, his hand and touch are usually emphasized. In Rome, striking examples of such symbolic depiction can be found on several Late Antique sarcophagi decorated with Christ's miracles (**Pl.164**). In Anglo-Saxon England, the image of the Raising of Lazarus carved at the top of the cross-shaft at Rothbury can be considered (**Pl.165**): here, the style in which a predominantly narrative scene has been rendered transforms the image into a primarily iconic and symbolic one. The figures are presented in a non-realistic composition and significant details in the performance of the miracle are emphasized, such as Christ's finger touching Lazarus' eyebrow, or the prominent, heavy shroud in which he was swathed and from which he emerges at the touch of Christ. Despite the narrative implied in the miracle story, and the number of classical Roman

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[127] See supra, pp. 84-7.
[128] See CASSS, vol. 8, pp. 129-39; see also Lang, 'The Apostles', pp. 276-9, and Hawkes, 'Art of the church', pp. 344-5.

examples of it (**Pl.134**), this Anglo-Saxon version presents the use of an iconic style in both the arrangement and the rendering of the images.[129]

Some of the figures on the Ruthwell and Bewcastle crosses have been widely discussed and accepted as paradigmatic in representing an Anglo-Saxon iconic style: this is particularly true when looking at the depiction of Christ in Majesty (**Pl.152**), appearing on both monuments, which displays all the elements appropriate to such a representation. Christ's hand is prominent in the blessing gesture, while his feet do not convey particular balance or stability, but seem almost too small and distant to support the great figure: what is essential here is the deeper meaning that such details infer. At Ruthwell, a more pronounced corporeity is obtained and underlined by means of the carving of the clothes that bring Christ's body to life instead of just covering it. [130] Such weight, in apparent contradiction with the floating, suspended and sometimes incorporeal nature of iconic depiction, has often been attributed to a distinctive 'Roman' style, and paralleled for example on the apse-mosaic of SS Cosma e Damiano (**Pl.58**), as well as in the apse mosaics at Santa Pudenziana (**Pl.19**), or in the heavy-bodied Angel of the Annunciation in Santa Maria Antiqua (**Pl.91**), dated to the phase of decoration of Pope John VII (705-07).[131]

The influence of a 'Roman' style in the rendering of the figures can be seen even in apparently secondary or technical aspects of Anglo-Saxon sculpture, such as the classical outfits worn by the figures in the carvings. In early Christian iconography, the classical tunic/toga and *pallium* came to be the 'default' option when depicting Christ, saints or martyrs and there has been considerable discussion and speculation on the Anglo-Saxon ability to represent a style of clothing that was far removed from their own, and thus adopted primarily as an artistic or iconographic device. Naturally, as it has been widely illustrated so far, Anglo-Saxon artists would have been familiar with this aspect, not only from classical funerary art (sarcophagi), which abounded with human

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[129] Hawkes, 'The Rothbury Cross', pp. 85-7.
[130] See Orton, *Fragments of History*, pp. 81-7.
[131] See supra, p. 174

figures, but also from contact with manuscript art and possibly the painted icons brought to Wearmouth-Jarrow by Benedict Biscop.[132]

The transition to the large-scale medium of stone sculpture must be born in mind when considering the ways in which 'classical-looking outfits' are rendered. The effects are diverse and vary from the frieze fragment at Jarrow with the man wearing a short tunic, plausible in its look but strongly abbreviated in its form, to the complex and multi-layered outfit of the lively, large-scale Annunciation angel on the Lichfield shrine (**Pl.161-166**).[133] Probably the most important consideration to be made here is that the use of classical clothing is not purely imitative, but chosen with awareness as demonstrated, for instance, by the preference for a different and distinctive attire when portraying the secular figure of the 'falconer' on the Bewcastle cross.[134]

Finally, a more practical expression of *Romanitas* in the Anglo-Saxon figural style – that linked with the technique of the reliefs themselves and the range of skills that is possible to appreciate from their analysis – remains to be considered. One of the most acute observations in this respect was made by Lang, who noticed how the faces of the Apostles on the cross-shaft at Otley are only roughly carved, in order to then receive a naturalistic rendering of their

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[132] Bede, *Historia Abbatum* (Plummer ed.), ch. 6, pp. 369-70: 'picturas imaginum sanctarum quas ad ornandam aecclesiam beati Petri apostolic, quam construxerat, detulit; imaginem videlicet beatae Dei genetricis semperque virginis Mariae, simul et duodecim apostolorum, quibus mediam eiusdem aecclesiae testudinem, ducto a parietem tabulato praecingeret; imagines evangelicae historiae quibus australem aecclesiae parietem decoraret; imagines visionum apocalipsis beati Iohannis, quibus septentrionalem aeque parietem ornaret, quatinus intrantes aecclesiam omnes etiam litterarum ignari, quaquaversum intenderent, vel semper amabilem Christi sanctorumque eius, quamuis in imagine, contemplarentur aspectum;'. See also, P. Meyvaert, 'Bede and the church paintings at Wearmouth-Jarrow' in *Anglo-Saxon England* 8 (1979), pp. 63-77.
[133] Recovered in 2003 under the nave of Lichfield cathedral. See W. Rodwell, J. Hawkes, E. Howe & R. Cramp, 'The Lichfield Angel: a Spectacular Anglo-Saxon Painted Sculpture' in *The Antiquaries Journal* 88 (2008), pp. 48-108.
[134] In pre-Viking sculpture the representation of secular figures seems quite rare, while it becomes more frequent on Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture, and with it the recourse to a different style of clothing.

individual features with a carefully modelled layer of gesso and paint: the same exact technique that can be observed on some of the Roman sarcophagi.[135]

When taking into account the concept of style in relation to *Romanitas* in the corpus of Anglo-Saxon figural sculpture, it is apparent that Anglo-Saxon artists were able to generate complex and varied responses, often resulting in monuments that display a creative coexistence of several different aspects of Roman 'style' and which are in turn open to multiple interpretations. It is interesting to note how a similar approach was adopted for non-figural decoration, as it will be discussed in the next sections.

6.2 d) Motifs

In Anglo-Saxon sculpture, Roman inspiration can also be detected in the non-figural ornamentation and here some of the most frequent and successful motifs used in the decoration can be considered, in order to show how Rome acted as a powerful reservoir for even the most 'traditional' decorative details.

It has long been recognized how the vine-scroll, and more generally most vegetal/foliate decoration, seems to be a 'non-native' motif in the context of Anglo-Saxon sculpture, and one particularly prone to be charged with symbolic meanings.[136] Nevertheless, it is generally discussed in terms of a pattern, and analysed stylistically following the minute details of its aspect and rendition, often broken down into very detailed accounts of the style and form of flowers, fruits, leaves and type and movement of the plant-scroll. However, being a long-standing Roman motif, it would probably be more fruitful in this context to consider the impact of its *Romanitas* on Anglo-Saxon sculpture not so much in

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[135] Lang, 'Monuments from Yorkshire', pp. 114-5; Orton, *Fragments of History*, pp. 82-9 in reference to discussion on the rendering of classical-looking clothing and deep/low relief in Anglo-Saxon sculpture.

[136] See J. Hawkes, 'The Plant-Life of Early Christian Anglo-Saxon Art' in *From Earth to Art. The Many Aspects of the Plant-World in Anglo-Saxon England*, C.P. Biggam (ed.), New York 2003, pp. 263-86; D. Mac Lean, 'Nortumbrian Vine-scroll Ornament and the *Book of Kells*' in *Northumbria's Golden Age*, J. Hawkes & S. Mills (eds), Stroud 1999, pp. 178-90.

terms of shapes, but rather as a means of underlining its overall importance as a signifier of 'things Roman'.

First and foremost, therefore, it is essential to focus on the Late Antique and Mediterranean ancestry of the design, which is easily recognizable in several monuments, in Rome and elsewhere. Collingwood correctly offered the vine-scroll on the *Ara Pacis* in Rome as the ultimate example of this kind of 'Roman embellishment' (**Pl.167**).[137] Some of the details later adopted in the Anglo-Saxon vine-scroll are certainly present here: the flowing leaves and diverse fruit and flowers, enlivened by a rich variety of animal life. It is interesting to note how the vine-scroll on the *Ara Pacis* decorates not only the large rectangular panel below the processional frieze on the north and south faces of the altar, but also the vertical pilasters framing the corners and entrances on the east and west sides. A clear line of ancestry links this first-century sculpted monument with the vine-scroll-laden twelfth-century apse mosaic in the Basilica of San Clemente (**Pl.168**), which is in fact thought to have been inspired by the original mosaic of the fourth-century *titulus*, underlying the twelfth-century basilica.[138] Another striking Roman parallel is the fifth-century mosaic in the atrium of the Lateran Baptistery, where extremely rare and lavish fragments of the original marble *opus sectile* decoration, representing large panels and bands of spiralling plant-scroll are preserved (**Pl.168**).

While the vine-scroll in the apse of the Lateran Baptistery atrium can be described as inhabited by crosses, in Rome this motif is more often populated by animals, and several relevant examples survive, starting with the basilica of San Lorenzo fuori le mura. The level of the Onorian presbytery, once the nave of the Pelagian church, is much higher than in the early middle ages, and thus offers now a much closer view of the spoliated trabeations, densely carved with spiralling plant-scrolls, inhabited with prominent, lively animals (**Pl.169**). Even acknowledging the privileged viewpoint of the present visitor, these trabeations

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[137] Collingwood, *Northumbrian Crosses*, p. 39. It is difficult to assess how much, if any, of the Ara Pacis would have been visible in the early medieval period.

[138] See Brandenburg, pp. 150-2.

would have been visually accessible from the matronea, which in turn were directly accessible to the pilgrims who had just visited the Constantinian *circus basilica*.[139]

Another Roman monument that might have acted as an influential and prestigious model is the Oratory dedicated to the Virgin built by Pope John VII in St Peter's: in this context are particularly relevant the pilasters, richly decorated with inhabited vine-scrolls, that framed one of the walls, in turn flanking the barley-sugar columns of the central canopy, themselves referencing the spiral columns of the complex monument over the tomb of the Apostle (**Pl.92**). [140] A probably later (ninth-century?) fragment of a column/pilaster decorated with inhabited vine-scroll is among the sculptures recovered from Santa Maria Antiqua (**Pl.169**).

Beyond the field of carved vine-scroll motifs is the vault mosaic of Santa Costanza: here, sections covered with round medallions containing small winged putti, birds, animals, busts and foliate ornament are set next to framed scenes of vintage, rich with twirling branches, leaves, flowers and fruits (**Pl.13**).[141] In the corpus of carved Anglo-Saxon vine-scroll, it is not impossible to identify references to this Roman visual heritage and a marked preference for similar processes of creative conflation in the articulation of such resonant motifs.

Collingwood was one of the first to recognize the importance of the vine-scroll motif in Anglo-Saxon sculpture, noting an interpretative connection with the 'Tree of Life', a symbolism further enhanced when this motif occurred on a cross.[142] However, as already mentioned, Collingwood's main interest was to provide a chronology for the material he surveyed, and so the vine-scroll motif was used by him primarily as a tool to establish this, rather than pursuing its Roman heritage and symbolic significance. Likewise, Ernst Kitzinger's

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[139] See supra, p. 24
[140] See supra, pp. 167, 175-6.
[141] See supra, pp. 25-7.
[142] Collingwood, *Northumbrian Crosses*, pp. 39-55.

fundamental article on the topic looked principally at the genesis of the motif, favouring an Eastern Mediterranean (Palestinian) origin, rather than assessing the possible reasons behind its prominence and centrality on carved monuments. His interest lay mainly in identifying the most unadulterated version of the Anglo-Saxon vine-scroll, in order to establish those which were closer to the 'plain imitation of the foreign rather than the local variation', an approach which is historically limiting and hampers the appreciation of creativity and critical thinking on the part of the Anglo-Saxon sculptors.[143]

Therefore, in turning to the Anglo-Saxon milieu of sculpture and in particular to its vine-scroll decoration, it is important not to look for the exact models, following cataloguing tendencies, but rather to ascertain the visual sources behind this motif and the reasons why it was so successful. In this context, the *Romanitas* of the early Christian examples provide a clear and meaningful visual heritage, to which the motif could be affiliated, while also granting the potential for a renewed iconic reading of it, one consciously established by the Anglo-Saxons.

At Hexham, a wealth of fragments from at least three crosses survive, which are almost exclusively decorated with plant-scrolls: the stems form regular medallions, containing stylised 'leaf and berry type' fillers (**Pl.170**).[144] A fragment from Little Ouseburn (N. Yorkshire), (**Pl.171**) comprises the centre of a cross-head, dated eighth/ninth century, which is carved on one face with a large bush-scroll: this occupies the central roundel and sprouts in volutes and flowers from a central base, possibly the top of an urn, a detail highly evocative of Roman examples from the Lateran Baptistery or Santa Costanza.[145]

In addition to such 'plain' design, there is also the inhabited vine-scroll, alive with animals intent on feeding from the fruits, flowers and buds blossoming along the stems, which deserves further consideration. It is one of the most prolific motifs in Anglo-Saxon sculpture and has often been deemed to

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[143] E. Kitzinger, 'Anglo-Saxon Vine-scroll Ornament' in *Antiquity* 10 (1936), pp. 61-71.
[144] Cramp, 'Early Northumbrian Sculpture at Hexham'.
[145] CASSS, vol. 8, pp. 209-10.

adopt an 'insular' stride fairly soon after its introduction to the region, characterised by a penchant for the geometric interlacing of the plants and a progressively more 'Germanic' rendering of the animals. Regardless of these stylistic concerns, its use and characteristics are evident in a number of contexts. The early ninth-century panel from Jedburgh (Scottish Borders) (**Pl.171**), probably part of a screen or possibly a shrine, presents a regular plant-scroll originating symmetrically from a central stem, with pecking animals roughly paired according to species, arranged on a large, rectangular, vertically-oriented slab. [146] The shrine-slab from Hovingham is also decorated with a narrow, horizontal band of inhabited vine-scroll placed below the arcaded scenes, strongly reminiscent of Late-Antique examples found on Roman sarcophagi (**Pl.149-150**).[147] On such funerary monuments, it is possible that the use of the vine-scroll motif would have alluded to the regenerative and everlasting overtones of Christian afterlife.

The use of the inhabited scroll on the stone crosses further illustrates the symbolic complexities inherent in the motif and the versatile manner in which it was employed. The cross at Otley, for instance, offers – on a single monument – three different articulations of the vine-scroll motif (**Pl.172**): the half-bust figures of angels on one of the broad faces are contained in vine-scroll medallions,[148] complementing the busts of the Apostles-Evangelists on the opposite face framed within architectural niches; of the narrow sides, one is decorated with a plant-scroll in which the elaborately crossing stems create oval-shaped medallions with prominent buds, while on the other is an inhabited vine-scroll,

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[146] R. Cramp, 'The Anglian Sculptures from Jedburgh' in *From the Stone Age to the 'Forty-Five'. Studies presented to R.B.K. Stevenson*, A. O'Connor & D.V. Clarke (eds), Edinburgh 1983, pp. 269-84.

[147] Compare also with Gaul: the stucco decorating the intrados of an arch in the Crypt of Notre-Dame-de-Confession (Church of Saint Victor, Marseilles, fifth century) or the altar slab from the same church; the carved column from Notre-Dame-de-la-Daurade (Toulose, fifth/sixth century); the Sarcophagus of St Drausius, from Soissons (seventh century). These are all extensively illustrated in Hubert-Porcher-Volbach, *Europe in the Dark Ages*. The architectural ornamentation at Marseilles can be put side by side with the decoration of the portal at Ledsham which, although heavily restored, is deemed to be modelled on the seventh-to-eighth century design. See CASSS, vol. 8, pp. 192-8.

[148] Psalm 91 'For he hath given his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways'.

filled with birds and quadrupeds pecking at the fruit.[149] While showing the fruitful creativity in which this traditional Roman motif was articulated, the iconographic significance of the vine-scroll in this context may allude especially to the fruitfulness of Christian discipleship (John 15) – being actively transmitted by the teaching of the Apostles and Evangelists – and everlasting life, granted through partaking of the sacrament of the Eucharist (John 6:47-59).[150] A similar interpretation can be proposed for the decoration on the cross from Easby, which, like the Otley cross, combines finely carved vine-scroll panels, inhabited by large, lively animals, with figural panels of the Apostles and Christ in Majesty, and bands of interlace on the narrow faces of the shaft. [151]

Thus, while bearing firmly in mind the Roman ancestry of the vine-scroll motif, its interpretation cannot be limited to that of a ubiquitous ornamental 'filler'. The symbolic associations that granted this motif such strength and vitality in Anglo-Saxon sculpture are mostly those originating from scriptural and exegetical overtones. This is particularly evident on the Ruthwell cross, where the theme of ecclesiastical salvation is further emphasized by the concomitant use of excerpts from the Old English poetic tradition associated with the 'Dream of the Rood'. As Ó Carragáin has demonstrated, the close associations between the figural panels and the vine-scroll here give true depth and significance to the iconographical programme of the monument: the vine-scroll and its animals feeding from it constantly refer to and enhance the ideas related to the communion of the faithful with the Church and the participation of its members in the mystery of the sacraments. At the same time, they point to the sacrifice of Christ, the True Vine,[152] and the universal salvation born from the Crucifixion. When read in conjunction with the overall decoration of a carved monument, the Eucharistic mysteries remain essential clues for a real

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[149] CASSS vol. 8, pp. 215-9.

[150] The cross at Easby and the polygonal shaft from Melsonby, possibly a piece of liturgical furnishing (lectern/ambo?), offer other examples of a complex iconography, uniting figural, inhabited vine-scroll and interlace. For Melsonby see CASSS, vol. 6, pp. 175-7.

[151] See also Croft, CASSS vol. 6, pp. 89-92.

[152] John 15:1

understanding of the vine-scroll motif, even when the rendering of it is deemed traditionally 'insular'.

Although the vine-scroll decoration on stone monuments may also have been chosen for specific formal reasons, such as the appropriateness of the pattern for vertical, elongated panels, the ultimate driving force was the combination with symbolic Christian references, especially to the Tree of Life, as noted early on by Collingwood. On an Anglo-Saxon stone cross, the use of the vine-scroll would enhance the representation and interpretation of the monument as the paradisiacal Tree of Good and Evil that caused the fall of mankind, and the same tree from which the cross was carved out, an allegorical but antithetical tool of salvation through the sacrifice of Christ.[153]

Indeed the vine-scroll can be a key element in unlocking the iconographical interpretation of Anglo-Saxon monuments decorated with this motif, and proposed readings may prove far from the 'traditionally' insular and repetitive use often suggested in its deployment on the crosses. Denton's work on the vine-scroll of the Bewcastle cross indicates that, just as at Ruthwell, the overall cohesion of the iconographic programme is enhanced by the very distinctive depiction of the vine-scroll (**Pl.173**).[154] While the sun-flower shaped motif may allude to the 'Sun of righteousness',[155] the metamorphosis of the plants on the different panels can be interpreted on a first level as pointing at the passing of time and seasons with all its associated natural phases: the budding and growing of saplings, the production of flowers and fruits, the gathering of seeds – a theme also highlighted by the unique presence of the sundial, which seems almost to grow out of the plant-scroll. At a deeper level, she argues, these 'agricultural' phenomena can be linked to the symbolic events

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[153] Jeremiah 17:7; Revelation, 22:2: 'In the midst of the street thereof, and on both sides of the river, was the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruits every month: the leaves of the tree for the healing of the nations'; Ephesians 3:17-19; Psalm 1:3; see Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, pp. 286, 311.

[154] A. Denton, 'Imagining Orthodoxy: Quoting Rome, Visual Citation and Creative Plagiarism in the Art of Anglo-Saxon Northumbria', paper delivered at the Leeds International Medieval Conference, July 2009.

[155] Malachi 4:2

of birth, growth, flowering, death and resurrection of Christ, and of His followers, in a multi-layered visual experience, immediately understandable to a rural audience as well as to a more sophisticated ecclesiastical one, combining seasons and liturgy, earthly and spiritual through the medium of carved vine-scroll. This would certainly mirror the Anglo-Saxon use of a Roman style in figural sculpture: the Anglo-Saxon artists approached and employed motifs with the same predilection not for themes, or the manner they were rendered, but for the symbolic potential that they uncovered and the possibility of multiple readings.

In light of the symbolic complexities implied in the use of the vine-scroll motif, it is worth turning to consider the other motif commonly found on Anglo-Saxon sculpture which has been deemed to be 'traditionally insular', namely the interlace patterns. The origin of this type of ornament in Anglo-Saxon art is usually ascribed to its Celtic and Germanic backgrounds: the possibility that it constituted a 'native' motif generated particular scholarly interest in the attempt to find, in the study of its diverse shapes and forms, elements that could help establish a chronology and development of the sculpture. In terms of its potential *Romanitas*, however, it is notable that on early pre-Viking sculpture interlace is often found in combination with vine-scroll and/or figural ornament, evidence of the freedom and creativity of Anglo-Saxon artists, which contradicts any interpretation of the use of the motifs at their disposal according to constraining frames of origins.

One suggestion concerning its symbolic potential is the attribution of an apotropaic value to the interlace, a function that may have contributed to its continuing popularity. This aspect was effectively summarized by Kitzinger, who did suggest caution and careful consideration of the type of object on which interlace appears, in order to postulate a connection between its function and the need for protection. He illustrated this by taking into account entrances, considered particularly appropriate channels for evil forces, so that often the access to a sacred space was marked by sections of interlace; just as at the

entrance to the porch of the church of St Peter, Wearmouth, where the jambs are decorated with incised serpentine creatures, both their jaws and bodies reduced to interlace and their tails arranged to form a Tau cross (**Pl.174**).[156] Another example can be found in the architectural carvings in the church of St Peter at Britford (Wiltshire) (**Pl.175**), where the jambs of the arched entrance to the north *porticus* are embellished by a complex arrangement: on the east jamb two pilasters are covered in vine-scroll, framing a section of sunken and raised square slabs, two of which are carved with interlace; on the west jambs only one interlace panel survives, although it is likely that the decoration, rather than being unfinished, was intentionally less elaborate.[157]

Taking such observations further, it is notable that north and west were the points of the compass traditionally associated with the devil:[158] this may explain, in part, why the interlace panels can be found carved on the faces of the monument thus oriented, as it happens for example at Bewcastle. A similar, 'protective' interpretation has also been suggested for some of the manuscript illuminations: Jennifer O'Reilly proposed that images of the Evangelist and their symbols could function as 'apotropaic guardians of the sacred text'. This could hold true with reference to the interlacing patterns often displayed on manuscript 'carpet pages': when these are placed at the beginning of the Gospel text, they could somehow function as a decorated shield at the threshold of the sacred scriptures.

The visual heritage of the interlace motif can be better understood taking into account its connections with metalwork: the north face of the Bewcastle cross displays a prominent chequered panel (**Pl.176**), enclosed by two panels of

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[156] See Kitzinger, 'Interlace and Icons', pp. 3-4; CASSS, vol. 1, pp. 125-6; Cramp, *Wearmouth and Jarrow*, pp. 172-3. One of the most usual parallels for the apotropaic use of interlace decoration is the 'Hypogee des Dunes' at Poitiers, dated to the seventh century. See Hubert-Porcher-Volbach, *Europe in the Dark Ages*, pp. 55-64.

[157] CASSS, vol. 7, pp. 206-8. It is possible that the north porticus was to house a relic chamber or a prestigious tomb.

[158] Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, p. 143; J. O'Reilly, 'Patristic and Insular Traditions of the Evangelists: Exegesis and Iconography' in *Le isole britanniche e Roma in etá romanobarbarica*, A.M. Luiselli Fadda & É. Ó Carragáin (eds), Roma 1998, pp. 49-94.

interlace, on which the metalwork 'effect' was achieved and enhanced by original polychromy and embellishment with the insertion of metal, glass or precious stones.[159] This can be further appreciated if taking into account the eighth-century panel at Bradford-on-Avon (Wiltshire) (**Pl.177**): here, three large fragments were probably part of the ornamentation of a door, arch or recess within a church.[160] The slab is framed by a band of knot interlace and divided into two inner panels, which are in turn decorated with a motif of 'interlocking and incised peltas' and 'small relief crosses enclosed in serrated diamond frames'. Both patterns have been associated with manuscript decoration, although the 'crosses in diamond frames', as at Bewcastle, are often paralleled to metalwork and millefiori; objects from Sutton Hoo and – more recently – from the Staffordshire Hoard can be invoked as very close comparisons (**Pl.178**).[161] Furthermore, the cross-shaft of Cundall/Aldborough (**Pl.133**) not only displays a complex arrangement of figural, inhabited vine-scroll and interlace motifs, but also includes a panel in which the stepped edge moulding filled with pellets creates a series of cruciform panels containing animals and thick volutes of bush vine sprouting from a base: the metalwork resonances are subtle, but they would have been clearly enhanced by paint.[162]

The influence of metalwork is consistent and significant in the consideration of the interlace motif, both in terms of its design and of the visual associations prompted by the colouring, but in turning to the Roman milieu the impact of mosaic might also have generated similar forms of inspiration. The vaults of the mausoleum of Santa Costanza in Rome are covered with three contiguous sections decorated with a combination of lozenges forming four-armed crosses, true crosses and hexagonal shapes (**Pl.12**). Such motifs display a

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[159] Bailey, *England's Earliest Sculptors*; Hawkes, 'Sacraments in Stone'; examples can be seen on the monuments from Otley, Masham, Melsonby, Lastingham.

[160] See CASSS, vol. 7, p. 205; an alternative explanation has interpreted them as part of a shrine or altar.

[161] On the Staffordshire Hoard see http://www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk/artefacts/ (accessed February 2010).

[162] CASSS, vol. 6, pp. 93-7.

powerful element of ambiguity in their visual reading: the cross-shapes are not immediately perceptible and can seem lost in the regularity of the pattern. A similar technique has often been observed for metalwork and manuscript illumination, and the sculptured patterns, where the crosses stand out by means of the polychromy. Moreover it has been suggested that this could constitute a tool of meditation and contemplation.[163]

Certainly, other monuments in Rome would have inspired Anglo-Saxon artists and contributed to the development of the interlace motif: the sixth-century marble screens enclosing the *schola cantorum* and the *solea* in the lower basilica of S. Clemente, later reassembled in the twelfth-century upper church, display motifs including woven pattern, crosses and plant-scrolls (**Pl.26**). Likewise, the carved slabs now forming a *schola cantorum* – dated to the renovations of Pope Eugenius II (824-7) – in the fifth-century basilica of S. Sabina, may have been produced to substitute an earlier screen, although it is impossible to say how many of the earlier motifs were imitated in the ninth-century sculpture. These include larger crosses flanked by palmettes under arcades, and smaller crosses inscribed in the pattern of roundels created by the plant-scroll motif.

Excavations within the churches of Santa Maria Antiqua and Santo Stefano Rotondo have also revealed the remains of the *solea* and – especially in the case of Santa Maria Antiqua – it is possible that some of the interlace fragments among the large quantity of sculptural material that has been recovered, belonged to the decorated screens of the processional platform. Furthermore, it could be suggested that the choice of an interlace pattern for the screens of the *solea* may have a connection with the above-mentioned concepts of apotropaic protection associated with thresholds and entrances: the *solea* was in fact the enclosed, liturgical space linked to the ambo, where the sacred scriptures were

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[163] The exegetical implications of the cross/lozenge motif have been explored in O'Reilly, 'Patristic and Insular Traditions'. See also L. Brubaker, 'Aniconic decoration in the Christian world (6th-11th century): East and West' in *Settimane del CISAM* 51 (2003), pp. 573-600.

read, and ultimately leading to the sanctuary, the holiest area within a church building.

Finally, another motif which- is central in Late Antique and early medieval art in Rome is the cross: carved, incised, jewelled, featuring in mosaics and frescoes, churches and metalwork, as one element of a pattern or as the main focus of a whole apse-decoration, the cross played an essential role in Anglo-Saxon art. The example of the three-dimensional, monumental stone cross has already been discussed; here it is the cross as a motif, already identified in the interlace and chequered patterns at Bewcastle, that will be further considered.

One of the most common ways in which the cross is used in Anglo-Saxon sculpture is to decorate both large funerary stones as well as smaller grave-markers (the so-called 'pillow stones'). Many have been recovered, usually from cemeteries attached to religious sites, such as Hartlepool, Lindisfarne, Whitby and York (**Pl.179**).[164] For these monuments, dated generally to a very early period (from the seventh century), a substantial Merovingian influence has often been mentioned, exemplified by some of the sarcophagi found at Poitiers (**Pl.180**).[165] However, two large-scale monuments decorated with crosses in deep relief have also been found at St Peter's, Wearmouth and at St Paul's, Jarrow (**Pl.181**). The first bears the image of a square-ended and stepped cross and a commemorative inscription, neatly arranged in the quadrants of the cross.[166] Similarly, the slab from Jarrow also depicts the stepped and square-ended cross, but here the inscription does not name the deceased, but reads 'IN HOC SINGULARI SIGNO VITA REDDITUR MUNDO'.[167] As has often been pointed out, this wording is highly evocative of Rufinus' translation of Eusebius'

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[164] See CASSS, vol. 1, pp. 97-101, 194-208; vol. 3, pp. 60-77; vol. 6, pp. 231-66; Lang, *Anglo-Saxon Sculpture*, pp. 11-2; and the recent PhD thesis by Dr C.F. Maddern, *The Northumbrian name stones of early Christian Anglo-Saxon England* (York 2007).

[165] Hubert-Porcher-Volbach, pp. 44-5.

[166] See CASSS, vol. 1, pp. 122-34; L. Webster & J. Backhouse (eds), *The Making of England. Anglo-Saxon Art and Culture AD 600-900*, London 1991, pp. 104-5; Cramp, *Wearmouth and Jarrow,* pp. 104-5.

[167] See CASSS, vol. 1, pp. 112-3; *Wearmouth and Jarrow*, p. 199; J. Higgitt, 'The dedication inscription at Jarrow and its context' in *The Antiquaries Journal* 59 (1979), pp. 343-74.

account of Constantine's vision: the visual allusion to the 'Romanness' of the symbolic significance prompted by the use of the cross motif in Anglo-Saxon sculpture is here further enhanced by the textual reference.

While funerary slabs with incised crosses are not common in Rome, the use of the cross itself as a symbolic and ornamental motif is widespread from a fairly early period. One of the fifth-century bronze door of the Lateran Baptistery chapel dedicated to John the Baptist is engraved with several small crosses (**Pl.182**). On a much larger scale, the jewelled cross, raised on a mound or stepped base, often with the letters A and Ω hanging from its arms represented a combined allusion to the cross of Golgotha, site of the Crucifixion, and the Heavenly Jerusalem of the Book of Revelation (**Pl.18-19-28-50-55-58-94**).[168] This kind of representation of the cross is one of the principal themes of apse decoration of the early Christian churches of Rome; it seems to be rarely depicted in Anglo-Saxon sculpture, although a cross on a stepped base is found at Kirkdale (North Yorkshire), on a tomb cover (**Pl.182**).[169] Furthermore, Hawkes' discussion of the originally polychromed and gemmed decoration of the stone high crosses bears witness to the potential Anglo-Saxon, skeuomorphic re-interpretation of the 'crux gemmata' of Roman early Christian art.[170]

6.2 e) Figural schemes or the Iconography

Having examined the varied and potentially 'Roman' uses of some carved motifs in Anglo-Saxon sculpture, the themes in the figural repertoire of Anglo-Saxon sculpture and their relation to Roman inspiration and influence can now be explored. As mentioned, Ó Carragáin's role in this approach has been pivotal,[171] and his interpretation of the iconography of the Ruthwell cross

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[168] Revelation 21.

[169] CASSS, vol. 3, pp. 161-2.

[170] Stepped crosses also appear on coinage, see A. Gannon, *The iconography of early Anglo-Saxon coinage: sixth to eighth century*, Oxford 2003; the recently discovered Staffordshire hoard also includes a large, jewelled processional cross.

[171] See supra, pp. 267-70.

provides a number of insights into the subject. Most important among these is the evidence provided for multiple readings of each carved panel, which can be supported by the often unusual iconographic details and the apparently ambiguous *tituli* bordering the images. Ó Carragáin has convincingly linked each of these multifaceted visual entities not only to the liturgical reality of contemporary Rome, but also to the writings and commentaries of Bede. This has created a credible system of interaction and influence, both in the fields of doctrinal/theological discussion as well as iconography. A telling example of the approach can be seen in the Visitation panel at Ruthwell (**Pl.183**): here, the polysemic nature of the image arises not from the iconography but from the accompanying *titulus*.[172] The representation of Mary and Elizabeth as it appears at Ruthwell is paralleled by several roughly contemporary images,[173] although the relevance of some details is properly underlined by Ó Carragáin: the distinctive way in which the two women 'embrace' in this carving is unmatched. This is not an 'affectionate cradling', nor are the two faces turned frontally to the viewer: Mary and Elizabeth stand equal, and while Elizabeth places her hand on her cousin's womb, Mary in turn holds Elizabeth's arm. The circuit of gestures thus emphasizes, on the one hand, Elizabeth's wondrous acknowledgement of Mary's expectant body, while on the other Mary gives in return her silent, almost humble assent.[174] This physical rendition of touch is paralleled by the movement of the two women's gaze: Elizabeth's is fixed on Mary, while the Virgin looks slightly outwards, communicating the sense of confirmation and acceptance of the incarnation miracle to the viewer. A very similar composition of this iconography appears in John VII's Oratory at St Peter's, and can probably be postulated for his cycle in the sanctuary of Santa Maria Antiqua.[175]

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[172] Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, pp. 95-106.

[173] Id., p. 101.

[174] Ó Carragáin notes how this portrayal of Mary seems to be a prelude to her bursting into the 'Magnificat'. Ibidem.

[175] See supra, ch.4.

However, despite the clear iconographic rendering of the Visitation at Ruthwell, the *titulus* makes no mention of the event, referring instead to the sisters Martha and Mary, an episode apparently distant, both in meaning and representation, from the Visitation. This has led to divergent opinions, most privileging the information provided by the textual border, rather than the visual implications of the iconography.[176] The key that links the two episodes, as Ó Carragáin has shown, lies in the liturgy: the episodes of Martha and Mary and the Visitation corresponded to the lections for the *Dormitio* of the Virgin (15 August) and the Nativity of the Virgin (8 September), two of the Marian feasts progressively introduced in Rome during the seventh century and observed regularly at least from the time of Pope Sergius (687-701).[177] These two feasts were closely associated, allowing not only for the liturgical clarification of the connection between the Martha-Mary episode and the cult of the Virgin,[178] but also allowing the informed viewer to be stimulated by the creative combination of visual and written that, instead of fixing one meaning onto the image, opened it to multiple, coexisting and complex references.[179]

With this single example of Ó Carragáin's iconographical reading of the Ruthwell Cross, it is evident that, although thought-provoking and valid for this particular monument, such complex liturgical and theological implications cannot be postulated as a general key to unlock the significance of all others, or even those bearing a figural decoration. Liturgical use cannot be the only interpretation for these crosses: most of them were prominent public monuments, and thus presuppose a varied and diversified audience, with

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[176] See É. Ó Carragáin, 'Between Annunciation and Visitation: Spiritual Birth and the Cycles of the Sun on the Ruthwell Cross: A Response to Fred Orton', in *Theorizing Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*, C.E. Karkov & F. Orton (eds), Morgantown 2003, pp. 131-87.

[177] Luke 10:38-42; Luke 1:39-47; Ó Carragáin, 'Between Annunciation and Visitation', pp. 149-53; see also supra, ch.4.

[178] Just as Mary (of Bethany) 'has chosen the better part', so the Virgin Mary chose to 'embody the hope of humankind'; in addition, the celebration of the birth of the *Theotokos* reinforced her role in the birth of Christ. Id., pp. 150-2.

[179] There are further aspects in Ó Carragáin's interpretation of this panel that connect it to the Lenten preparation and penitence of the catechumens and the idea of the cult of the Virgin, pregnant with Christ, and the Church, pregnant with the catechumens. Id., pp. 158-72.

different levels of reception of the theological implications that such liturgical readings necessarily involve. Certainly, the devotional or processional interpretations of these monuments have to be kept in mind, with a possible emphasis on funerary commemoration, and the cult of saints or of the Virgin. At the same time, especially after having considered the multifaceted nature of their form, layout, style, location, in combination with the images represented, it is clear that these monuments could serve as political and doctrinal statements: regardless of their lay or ecclesiastical patronage, crosses were expressions of power, control, belief of a group, family or community, as well as a display of evergetism, much like the Chapel of Theodotus at Santa Maria Antiqua and the other monuments and churches of Rome taken into account in this research.

The analysis of figural themes helps to underline this point, but it also introduces consideration of the nature of figural as opposed to non-figural carvings. Often, analysis of the figural carvings has been dominated by iconographic discussion, almost as if the other 'motifs' could not be iconographically read or interpreted. As demonstrated, the interplay of figural and vine-scroll carvings and their symbolic significances indicates that the exclusive interpretative focus on figural and narrative images can be limiting.[180] This aspect has been extensively examined by Hawkes, who has underlined the dichotomy involved in appreciating figural and non-figural carvings, which has almost resulted in the separation of scholarly approaches.[181] This is exacerbated by the relatively few figural carvings surviving within the corpus of stone sculpture. As a consequence these monuments are often addressed as if they represent a special and 'self-contained' group, having little in common with the non-figural examples. Undoubtedly, the less frequent figural carvings betray a

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[180] In Lang's *Anglo-Saxon Sculpture*, there is a whole section on iconography, followed by a selection of carvings, in which a number of them are described and taken into account according to the iconography of their figural carvings.

[181] J. Hawkes, 'Reading Stone' in *Theorizing Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*, C.E. Karkov & F. Orton (eds), Morgantown 2003, pp. 5-30.

conscious and therefore extremely significant choice made by sculptors and patrons, but this consideration should not isolate them from the general sculptural milieu. Such dichotomy and separation is strictly related to potential Roman inspiration, as has also been observed by Hawkes: if the discussion of Roman and Early Christian art itself is articulated and understood primarily through the concept of figural, such concepts in turn become an underlying starting-point when considering the Roman-influenced Anglo-Saxon sculpture.[182]

Moving on to consider specific examples of Anglo-Saxon iconographical themes and their possible Roman resonances, images of the Virgin provide a clear instance of themes that were popular and central in the Rome of the seventh and eighth century.[183] A carved fragment from Dewsbury (**Pl.184**), probably belonging to a single monument, represents one of the best known examples of a Virgin and Child image in Anglo-Saxon sculpture. The Virgin is represented seated and turned slightly to her left, holding a full-figure Child on her left knee. The Child's body is also turned to the left, while his face is frontal, and he appears to be holding a scroll. The piece is carved in very deep relief, and both figures are rendered with much detail, such as the Virgin head-piece, modelled face and deeply drilled eyes. This type of composition has been compared to the image of the Virgin and Child on the Cuthbert coffin, as well as the manuscript illustration in the *Book of Kells* (**Pl.185**). Such parallels are well-founded, but when turning to Rome, a wealth of material is available that could have provided equally significant sources of influence. In the church of Santa Maria Antiqua, there are four possible images of the Virgin and Child that could have been evocative to Anglo-Saxon visitors. The image of the Virgin and

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[182] Hawkes, 'Through a Glass Darkly'; J. Hawkes, 'Columban Virgins: Iconic Images of the Virgin and Child in Insular Sculpture' in *Studies in the Cult of St Columba*, C. Bourke (ed.) Dublin 1997, pp. 107-35; it would be interesting to consider the geographical distribution of figural sculpture, in order to explore if it occurs more frequently in those areas with an historically more prominent Roman background in Imperial times (Wiltshire?) or areas of a more intensive contemporary contact with Rome, through travel or ecclesiastical influence (Northumbria or Mercia).

[183] See supra, ch.4.

Child in the depiction of the Adoration of the Magi in the sanctuary is particularly interesting (**Pl.89**), especially for the posture of the mother and child; on the opposite wall, the fresco panel with St Anne holding the Child Mary (**Pl.76**) provides an example of the fully frontal figure of mother and child and on the left-hand pillar separating nave and sanctuary, a space entirely accessible to the general audience, is the fresco of the Mother and Child defined by Nordhagen as the 'Virgin with crossed hands' (**Pl.77**).[184] To the right of this panel is the large depiction of the Annunciation (**Pl.91**), which thus offers two influential, yet different, iconographies for the representation of the Virgin in a fairly confined space. Further images of the Virgin can also be found close to the entrance: on the right-hand side is the 'Virgin in the niche' (**Pl.78**),[185] while on the column of the nave, just meters away from the niche, is another fresco of the Virgin and Child, which Nordhagen identified as an early version of the Virgin *Eleousa* (**Pl.185**), with the Child sitting sideways and holding his hands towards the Mother's shoulder.[186] Another significant potential source of inspiration for the Anglo-Saxon representation of the Virgin and Child lies in the early seventh-century icon of the Pantheon (**Pl.186**): on the wooden panel, now smaller than when it was first made, the two figures are powerfully presented, both looking out at the viewer, with the Child – sitting sideways – holding a scroll. Here, the Virgin's large halo and headpiece are strongly resonant in the Dewsbury fragment.[187]

When trying to find parallels between model and the 'imitation', there is a tendency to expect close copies, almost as if the process of recreation involved

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[184] Nordhagen, 'Sumptuous votive gifts'.

[185] See supra, p. 173.

[186] Nordhagen, 'Earliest decorations', p. 63; Id., 'Frescoes of the seventh century', p. 130; the Virgin and Child in the *Book of Kells* is also often compared to this iconographical scheme.

[187] The 'Maria Regina' type does not seem very successful in Anglo-Saxon England as iconography, but it seems influential in terms of style. The fresco of the 'Madonna di Turtura' in the Catacomb of Commodilla presents an enthroned Virgin and Child: the details of her headpiece, the fact that the Child is holding a scroll and the frontal gaze of both figures are all details paralleled in the Dewsbury fragment.

templates rather than 'visualised' influences.[188] However, as has been argued, the inventiveness apparent in Anglo-Saxon art should not be dismissed and the reality of an image being the fruit of the creative conflation of several different sources is entirely possible.

A similar point can be made for another example of Marian iconography, that of the Annunciation, as preserved on the Hovingham panel (**Pl.149**). The various iconographic types constituting this monument have been carefully discussed by Hawkes[189] and to the images that may have been influential in creating the iconographic programme can be added the Annunciation fresco on the left-hand pillar between nave and sanctuary in Santa Maria Antiqua (**Pl.91**). The seventh-century fresco features the Angel in a standing pose and the basket next to the Virgin's throne. At the beginning of the eighth century, this image was painted over with an updated version of the same Annunciation, which seems to have preserved these very characteristics. Santa Maria Antiqua and the Hovingham iconography meet again in another image, that of the Women at the Sepulchre. Here, on the Anglo-Saxon carved slab, the classical mourning pose of one of the women, with her hands and mantle raised to her face,[190] appears in the Crucifixion panel in the Theodotus Chapel, as well as in the depiction of the same scene in the mosaic of John VII's Oratory at St Peter (**Pl.83**).

As already established, the cult of the Virgin was central in seventh-and eighth-century Rome, and played a large part in the shaping of Marian iconography in Anglo-Saxon England, especially in the particular visual renditions of the few extant examples of figural stone sculpture. However, there are many other images preserved in the Anglo-Saxon corpus that may have found inspiration in the multifaceted art of Rome. As noted, the representation of Christ in Anglo-Saxon sculpture constantly reflects elements available in the

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[188] Compare the process of influence discussed so far with the possible direct imitation of the Santa Maria in Trastevere icon offered in two Merovingian ivories; Hubert-Porcher-Volbach, pp. 262-3.

[189] Hawkes, 'Mary and the Cycle of Resurrection'.

[190] Hawkes, 'Mary and the Cycle of Resurrection', p. 257.

Roman visual milieu, especially in terms of style, articulating these elements in such a way that distinctively Roman characteristics coalesce into a distinctively Anglo-Saxon work of art. Thus, the image of Christ in Majesty, which appears on several Anglo-Saxon monuments – at Ruthwell, Bewcastle and Rothbury (**Pl.152-151**) – and on fragments from Dewsbury and Easby (**Pl.143-156**), display evidence of iconographical details being manipulated in accordance with the specific meaning conveyed by each monument. At both Ruthwell and Bewcastle the full figure of Christ, evocative of the apse mosaic of SS Cosma e Damiano (**Pl.58**), stands not on a colourful and immaterial background of clouds, but on two animals, so as to appropriately represent Christ recognized and acclaimed by the animals.[191] And, while the gesture of blessing in the Anglo-Saxon examples can be paralleled in the apse mosaic of San Lorenzo, the entire composition is reminiscent of the '*Largitio Pacis*' mosaic in one of the minor apses of the Mausoleum of Santa Costanza, which features a standing, blessing, beardless Christ (**Pl.15**). The half-length Christ in Majesty portrayed on the Rothbury Cross is, as observed by Hawkes, one of few images of this kind: another can be found in the centre of the cross-head of Easby.[192] It is interesting to note, however, that frescoes depicting the bust of Christ recur in Roman catacomb painting, for instance at Commodilla, and in particular in the large fresco in the 'lunetta' in the Catacomb of Ponziano, certainly visited by Anglo-Saxons (**Pl.53**). Here, Christ displays a prominent cruciform halo and holds the Book, just as he does at Rothbury. Finally, the fragment from Dewsbury also portrays the standing, blessing figure of Christ holding a scroll: what is notable here is the distinctive way in which, although represented as standing, the carving emphasizes the knees of the figure, a detail often visible and prominent in the enthroned version of the *Majestas*, and so provides a conflation of the two iconographies, which is enhanced by the sculptural medium.[193] Such conflation

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[191] Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, pp. 201-8.
[192] CASSS, vol. 6, p. 99.
[193] Cf. Santa Pudenziana apse mosaic and discussion of the Easby Majestas.

could thus synthetically allude to both Christ triumphant and glorified (standing) and Christ as Judge and Ruler of all things (seated).

A similar set of references can be found in a variation of the *Majestas* scheme, which shows Christ enthroned, flanked or surrounded by the Apostles, a scene generally associated with the authority of Christ centred on his divine, glorified nature and the message of salvation delivered to his Apostles, thus combining a sense of power and authority with the responsibility of Christian teaching. Such iconography seems to have been particularly fitting in Anglo-Saxon England, where issues of control, ecclesiastical as well as political, and the constant reaffirmation of Roman authority, symbolized by the Apostles, were central in the early medieval period.[194] It is interesting to note that this type of image seems to appear almost exclusively on columnar monuments – at Masham, Dewsbury and Reculver – where the form conveyed an intrinsic *Romanitas*, underlined and enhanced by the iconographical choice.[195]

Having said this, it is also important to note that it is not necessarily always possible to refer back easily and directly to Roman sources of inspiration for all examples of Anglo-Saxon iconography. The representation of the *Anastasis* or Harrowing of Hell,[196] for instance, is featured in Rome among the works associated with John VII; it appears twice at Santa Maria Antiqua, in two very similar frescoes, emphasizing Christ's energetic action of pulling Adam out of Hell while trampling on Hades (**Pl.187**). The third example, according to the surviving seventeenth-century drawings, was among the mosaics of John VII's Oratory at St Peter's: here, the scene seems to represent Christ almost floating in the mandorla in the act of pulling Adam out of Hell (**Pl.88**).[197] In the Anglo-

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[194] J. O'Reilly's introduction to *Bede, On the Temple*, Liverpool 1995 (Translated Texts for Historians), pp. xvii-lv; see also Lang, 'The Apostles' and Id., 'Monuments from Yorkshire'.

[195] In Rome the scene was popular in the early catacomb paintings (Cimitero dei Gordiani; Catacomba di Domitilla) and basilicas, for example at Santa Pudenziana and Sant'Agata dei Goti. See Matthiae-Andaloro, *Pittura Romana*, p. 26 fig. 12; Fiocchi Nicolai et al., *Catacombe Cristiane*, p. 86; Hawkes, 'Church triumphant', p. 34; Brandenburg, p. 220.

[196] See A. Kartsonis, *Anastasis. The Making of an Image*, Princeton 1986.

[197] Nordhagen, *Frescoes of John VII*, pp. 81-2, 86; in Rome the Anastasis appears also in a later fresco at San Clemente, in a mosaic in the San Zeno Chapel at Santa Prassede and on a cross-

Saxon corpus of sculpture, the only depiction of the event appears on the Wirksworth slab (**Pl.149**), but here it takes a very different form, if compared to Roman 'models'.[198] Here, Christ is depicted as opening a coffin, which contains the swathed figure of Adam: such details, unfamiliar in a Roman context, seem to belong to an early Eastern iconographic type.

The Ascension survives in the Anglo-Saxon carvings at Rothbury, Wirksworth and Reculver (**Pl.187-149**). The first two instances preserve the 'mandorla' iconographic type, with Christ framed in the mandorla – in turn held prominently by angels – soaring above a group of Apostles; this type of iconography is featured in Rome in a fresco in the lower church of San Clemente (**Pl.188**).[199] At Reculver, the image is of the 'striding type': Christ physically ascends on a steep and naturalistically rendered ground, his movement emphasized by the floating of his robe, reaching up for the Hand of God.[200] This iconography is partially paralleled on one of the wooden panels of the fifth-century doors of Santa Sabina (**Pl.188**). Here, the Ascension is represented in a somewhat 'mixed' way: four Apostles stand on a naturalistic albeit stylized background while above them Christ, in the characteristic 'striding' attitude, is literally being pulled up by two angels, while a third angel observes the scene. Thus, the representations of both the Anastasis and the Ascension available in Rome display a degree of iconographic variety, reflected in their Anglo-Saxon renditions, proving once more not the quest for set models to imitate, but the creative combination of different aspects and details, in order to create an original work of art.

Another iconographic theme that appears rarely in Anglo-Saxon sculpture is the Crucifixion.[201] It is, however displayed on the Rothbury Cross, and in the most prominent position, on the fragmentary cross-head (**Pl.189**). Here, the

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shaped reliquiary attributed to Pope Pascal I.

[198] Hawkes, 'The Wirksworth Slab', pp. 255-6.

[199] Tronzo, 'Setting and Structure'.

[200] Kozodoi, 'The Reculver Cross', pp. 71-3.

[201] See E. Coatsworth, *The Iconography of the Crucifixion in Pre-Conquest Sculpture in England*, (Unpublished PhD Thesis) Durham 1979.

naked arms of Christ suggest that he was depicted with a sleeveless long robe or the loincloth: although with different explanations, both Coatsworth and Hawkes favoured the loincloth. [202] An image of Christ wearing the long, sleeveless *colobium* can also be found in Rome, in the central fresco of the Crucifixion in the Chapel of Theodotus at Santa Maria Antiqua. In addition, the characteristic detail of the 'slightly drooped attitude' of Christ's hands as seen at Rothbury also appears on this Roman fresco (**Pl.83**).

Most of the scenes discussed also feature figures of the Apostles: in Anglo-Saxon sculpture they seem to be an iconographical theme in their own right, so it is necessary here to take into account their symbolic relevance. It has been noted that the Apostles were intimately connected with the orthodoxy and legitimacy of the Church's teachings and their activity of preaching, but the Apostles also shared a special link with Rome, being in turn symbolic of the Apostolic Church founded on the direct transmission of their teaching, and signifying its authority and canonical, ecclesiastical, scriptural orthodoxy. This is particularly relevant when considering that the Apostles are often depicted holding books, an attribute commonly associated with the act of teaching the word of God and ultimately spreading Christianity. Indeed, in early medieval Anglo-Saxon England, the book was one of the most prominent and powerful instruments of evangelization and liturgy, one often physically originating from Rome: books and relics were among the most desired objects to acquire when journeying *ad limina Apostolorum*, and it is possible that Anglo-Saxon patrons and audiences were aware of this, even when not having direct personal experience of it. In addition, it can be suggested that using, owning or carrying books would have been closely linked to priests and other pastoral figures, as well as the act of preaching and leading liturgical celebrations. Portraying Apostles on Anglo-Saxon monuments could thus be expected to elicit multiple responses from potential audiences, one referring to the establishment of the

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[202] Hawkes, 'The Rothbury Cross', pp. 77-80; Hawkes does argue that this reflects an early Christian iconographic type.

Apostolic Church, and the 'pillars' it rested upon, and the newly established, newly re-converted Anglo-Saxon church, relying on the work of its ecclesiastics, 'carrying books'.

The association between the monument form on which this particular iconography seems most common has been emphasized by Lang, who proposed that the 'Apostle Pillars' of Easby, Masham, Otley and Dewsbury could embody a liturgical function, that of Baptism.[203] This interpretation does not necessarily negate other, coexisting readings for such monuments. However, the idea that these columns and crosses would mark 'baptismal sites within ecclesiastical estates' opens up to further considerations.[204] It is puzzling (to say the least) to propose that the Anglo-Saxons would aspire to allude to and replicate Rome in so many ways – through topography, architecture, sculpture and liturgy – and yet omit reference to baptism. In early medieval Rome, the Lateran Baptistery was clearly the place of choice for this important ceremony, and the earliest, although not the only, building where this sacrament would take place. As demonstrated, other Baptisteries were set up in the city: at St Peter's, probably at Sant'Agnese, at least in one of the catacombs and possibly in other basilicas *ad corpus*.[205] In addition, there is direct evidence, not only of Anglo-Saxons being baptized in Rome, but also of at least one visitor to one of these baptismal sites, the Catacomb of Ponziano.[206] It is thus not unreasonable to suggest that such unmediated experiences would make their way back to Anglo-Saxon England, both in terms of the liturgy performed and the buildings where this occurred. It is useful here to underline the fact that not all baptisteries had to be large, lavish and independent structures like the Lateran Baptistery: in Rome, there are several examples of simple and small baptismal rooms, like those at the Catacomb of Ponziano, or at San Crisogono or San Clemente. Such considerations indicate the need to rethink the function of these

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[203] On the Easby cross it may be possible to identify St Peter (holding keys?).
[204] Lang, 'Monuments from Yorkshire', p. 117.
[205] See supra, ch.1.
[206] See supra, ch.2.

Anglo-Saxon monuments as 'baptismal signposts'; they certainly undermine the likelihood of Lang's interpretation.

6.3 Summary

From this rather lengthy discussion, it is possible to affirm that monuments influenced each other, as is evident from the Bewcastle and Ruthwell crosses. Regardless of such interaction and cross-influences, the individual combination of form, possible function and choice of iconography shows that each monument and/or carving had its own identity. Even when belonging to a 'group', Anglo-Saxon sculptures provide a unique combination of different elements chosen or created with a specific intent.[207]

It is also possible to see that the carved monuments of Anglo-Saxon England here described presented Rome in a variety of more or less nuanced ways, and according to the requirements of each monument, which could be rooted in the ecclesiastical, social or political situation surrounding it. The study of Anglo-Saxon sculpture was initially and primarily considered from a descriptive and classificatory point of view, an approach which is essential to gain full insight into the different forms of the monuments and the subjects of the carvings. Although this approach frequently raises questions and disagreements, it is a necessary step, fundamental to building a picture in which the sculpture can be understood to effectively communicate the issues and agendas of those responsible for their production. Against this historiographical background, consideration of the monuments in the landscape has emphasized the correlated aspects of control and wealth of any given territory, often reflecting changes in the topography of power, and the degree of *Romanitas* being enacted. With this in mind, the production of sculpture in Anglo-Saxon England can be seen as reflecting the patronage and control associated with ecclesiastical evergetism in early medieval Rome.

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[207] J. Hawkes, 'Anglo-Saxon Sculpture: Questions of Context', in *Northumbria's Golden Age*, J. Hawkes & S. Mills (eds), Stroud 1999, pp. 204-15.

While not postulating Roman sources or inspiration for each and every stone monument or fragment, it is possible to trace a great awareness of what the invocation of *Romanitas* could have implied, and the associations it could have generated at multiple levels, both in terms of the images depicted as well as the forms, layout, ornamental motifs and interactions with liturgical practices. It would be interesting to add to such observations ideas about the artists themselves, their possible training and the processes of creating the sculpture, including potential interactions between different artists, direct contact with Rome and especially the time required for the production of the sculpture. For Anglo-Saxon architecture, it is almost a given to appeal to the presence of 'foreign' stonemasons in the actual conception and building of churches, while in the field of stone sculpture it has never been deemed necessary to resort to 'external' workers. The reasons for such a disparity of treatment are obscure. In addition, it is interesting to note the importance of factoring in the time and potential cost of production: this has been taken into account for the creation of manuscripts, and to some extent for some churches building material, but has played a more marginal role in the discussion of stone sculpture. Attention to the technical and practical aspects of creating carved stone monuments, combined with a renewed interest in the figural schemes, brings to the forefront questions of audience and patronage which seems to be the next natural transition in researching Anglo-Saxon sculpture.