

CONCLUSION

In a recent paper by Joyce Hill on the potential association of Archbishop Wulfstan of York with Bishop Leofric of Exeter, she felt it was necessary to state at the outset that her argument was not based on the ‘manoeuvres of cultural historians’.¹ Indeed, her talk focused on a physical object, the manuscript Cambridge Corpus Christi College 190, but included interesting and thought-provoking observations on some of the very human aspects of the episcopal office, as well as consideration of the often circumstantial nature of the evidence that surrounds protagonists in Anglo-Saxon history, who frequently soar, usually thanks to a dry academic writing-style, above human daily life, experiences and concerns.

It seems that, although referring to a much later period, Hill’s comments fit well with the topic and general tone of this thesis, which investigates material evidence, like church buildings, stone sculpture and frescoes, to gain a better understanding of the intellectual and cultural milieu in which they were produced, always keeping at the forefront the political, ecclesiastical and human preoccupations of the patrons and audience of such monuments. The fundamental idea around which this research was built is that looking at Anglo-Saxon sculpture and architecture through the different aspects of *Romanitas* invoked, interpreted and conveyed by these monuments, demonstrates how this can be considered an essential tool in revealing the complex and multifaceted reality in which the monuments were created and which they expressed. This study is thus undeniably a work of cultural history, one embracing the words of Gombrich: ‘no culture can be mapped out in its entirety, while no element of a culture can be understood in isolation’.²

¹ J. Hill, ‘Two Anglo-Saxon Bishops at Work: Wulfstan, Leofric and Cambridge Corpus Christi College MS 190’; paper delivered at the Centre for Medieval Studies, York, 15 June 2010.

² ‘Ernst Gombrich discusses the concept of cultural history with Peter Burke’ in *The Listener* 90 (1973), pp. 881-83. See <http://www.gombrich.co.uk/showdoc.php?id=19> (accessed February 2010).

In this study, therefore, elements from two cultures, apparently distant both geographically and ideologically, have been brought together to reveal a substantial number of points of contact and underlying similarities in intent and outcome. The physical means of contact between the two cultures have been elucidated through the analysis of early medieval itineraries and a renewed focus on the social and religious impact of catacomb pilgrimage. The different artistic strands active and influential in Rome have also been discussed, and with them the political and ideological background of the people or groups responsible for the support of these monuments. In addition, the account of the development, starting with the reign of Constantine, of an officially Christian and imperial art, discussed alongside with the increasing political and social importance of the Pope in Rome, has allowed these two main forces at play in the city to be integrated, while also enabling their impact in the sponsorship of church and monument building in early medieval Rome to be delineated and contextualized. Thus, a topography of power has been outlined and filled with a myriad of structures of varied status and significance. Among these, the church of Santa Maria Antiqua emerges as a substantial case-study, through which the complex intellectual layering in action in the architecture and decoration of the churches of early medieval Rome can be fully elucidated.

Following this, the architecture and sculpture of Anglo-Saxon England, usually approached through the study of different academic disciplines, has been interrogated using the conceptual tool of *Romanitas*, and the various responses to this idea are brought together and discussed, to show the many ways in which the influence of Rome could transform and underpin the churches and monuments of Anglo-Saxon England. From locations to patronage, to the reuse of *spolia*, or the almost antiquarian taste for Late Antique motifs, from the early Christian symbolism of jewelled decoration, metal and mosaic, to the intentional choice of multilayered iconographical constructions, Rome has been used in this thesis as a magnifying glass, and at the same time as

an element that can appear unsolicited and often unrecognized. Thus, this study collects and creates a synthetic vision of the many ways of representing 'Rome' in early Anglo-Saxon England, one that is not focused on style, iconography or individual monuments, but that aims to provide a background applicable to Anglo-Saxon England in its entirety, a conscious Anglo-Saxon mindset, usually driven by ideology and patronage.

In his 1940 article, 'The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline', Panofsky opened by considering the shift in the meaning of the word *humanitas*: while in the Classical and Hellenistic periods *humanitas*, determined by *pietas* and *paideia*, was opposed to *barbaritas*, in the Middle Ages the main contrast seems to be between *humanitas* and *divinitas*.³ In the early medieval period, however, and especially in the period considered in this work, probably in connection with the theological controversies on the nature of Christ, the concepts of *humanitas* and *divinitas* seem to be set on an equal footing. When translating this idea into the realm of artistic production, it could be suggested that early medieval 'artists', while knowingly perceiving themselves in a subordinate position, strove to reach and comprehend the *divinitas* of Christ: this was somehow facilitated by the *humanitas* of Christ, his shared corporeal existence and experience of the world. In light of this, it can be said that the focus of this thesis has been on the human experience and perception of Rome and its monuments, and of Anglo-Saxon architecture and sculpture, and on how these two worlds, in both their physical and intellectual spheres, met, merged and transformed each other, frequently elaborating on aspects of the divine. Further questions, especially those on patronage, audience and function, can help in visualizing even more closely the human 'content' of early medieval art,⁴ creating a welcome, refreshing interaction with previous approaches that privileged classification, form, style, dating, and ethnicity.

³ See Fernie (ed.), pp. 184-95.

⁴ For the meaning of 'content' in this context see Fernie (ed.), p. 191.

In a study of such scope, it is unavoidable that some aspects and potential questions have had to be restricted in the interest of time and space. However, it is also essential to indicate potential future strands of research and areas that could yield further questions and fruitful discussions.

At the beginning of this work, a clear explanation was given of how the type of evidence discussed – focusing in particular on architecture, sculpture and large scale painted/mosaic decoration – was selected from an undoubtedly much larger body of existing evidence: in a similar manner, geographical and chronological boundaries have been set as a precondition to the topic analysed.⁵ Nevertheless, it would be possible and valuable to expand on the topic, and undertake an analogous investigation of *Romanitas* as a source of inspiration in portable objects, for instance dyptichs, manuscripts or metalwork. This is probably one of the most immediate and obvious developments of this research. Furthermore, while the geographical focus of the thesis has been firmly set on Anglo-Saxon England, it would be interesting to investigate, from a similarly holistic perspective, whether a similar approach to and interpretation of Roman influence in artistic production can be identified in other ‘successor states’, or whether, as seems to be the case, at least in general, the use and metamorphosis of Late Antique motifs and iconography into something distinctively other was a creative and original prerogative of Anglo-Saxon England. A comparative study of, for instance, Lombardic or Visigothic material, would provide a fruitful expansion of the present work, and potentially offer further academic and intellectual interaction with the received scholarship of non-English speaking countries.

Following such observations, another issue raised by this work and deserving further exploration is the idea of restoring the concept of Late-Antiquity to Anglo-Saxon England, almost allowing this area of Western Europe to take part in a phenomenon by which it is normally considered to have been barely touched. It seems instead that this idea has been suggested on

⁵ See *supra*, Introduction.

several occasions, for instance an interesting contribution to the topic is A. Gillett's extensive review article, 'Rome's Fall and Europe's Rise: a View from Late Antiquity'.⁶ Gillett draws attention to the use of 'ethnicity' in some recent studies of the early medieval West, used to create 'attestations of a non-Hellenistic ethnic dynamic that overwhelmed classical discourses': a consequence of these approaches is that the West has become 'detached' from Late-Antiquity. Another fundamental contribution is that of Wickham, who constructs a very differentiated picture of western European regions so as to stress the number of various responses to a shared situation, while at the same time emphasizing the sense of belonging of all regions to a broader, post-Ancient world network. The present work can be considered as an additional proposal to this theme, in demonstrating how, at least in the artistic arena, resonances of Late Antiquity reverberate strongly in the art and architecture of Anglo-Saxon England, and seem to be frequently driven by the very same forces behind similar processes in fourth- to sixth/seventh-century Rome. This could be further extended to other parallels between Late Antique Rome and Anglo-Saxon England, for example, in the person of Wilfrid episcopal patronage and ecclesiastical and private landowning could be investigated with a particular attention to the similar attitudes of aristocrats and families in the Rome of the fourth and fifth century and Anglo-Saxon England of the seventh and eighth.⁷ Moreover, analysis of schismatic groups and their impact on the architecture and topography of the landscape could also inspire comparisons, as well as the role of women in promoting and supporting the spread of Christianity in a newly converted – or re-converted – country.

Moving on to aspects of this research more closely related to the field of art history, one of the most stimulating thoughts originated from a paper

⁶ See *supra*, Introduction fn. 12.

⁷ See *supra*, esp. chapter 1, when discussing the patterns of donations/bequest to churches and the essays in Cooper-Hillner (eds); also Costambeys, *Early Medieval Europe* 9 (2000), pp. 387-8.

delivered recently by Paul Crossley,⁸ which drew on ideas set out in his short but illuminating 1988 article, where he reviewed the concept of an ‘iconography of style’ applied to architecture, and especially to the gothic cathedral. While swiftly revising the observations of Krautheimer and Panofsky on the intellectual foundations of gothic architecture, Crossley drew attention to the fact that when the patron becomes an architect and the architect a ‘quasi-scholastic’, then ‘the mason’s lodge ceases to exist’.⁹ This moves the focus to an interest in function, and the technical, creative and synthetic elements of artistic production, to conclude with the suggestion that ‘medieval art and architecture contained layers of meanings, some contradictory, or only half-defined’ and that their ‘significances would have vibrated simultaneously in the mind of the educated observer’.¹⁰ As it has been widely demonstrated in this thesis, such considerations, albeit applied by Crossley, Panofsky, Warburg – and less so Krautheimer – to twelfth century architecture, are extremely relevant to early medieval Anglo-Saxon art.

In a further development, Crossley applies some rhetorical concepts to the structure of the gothic cathedral, focusing in particular on Chartres. The basic consideration that ‘rhetoric is about persuasion’ instantly calls to mind the observation, frequently rehearsed in this thesis, that Anglo-Saxon monuments were often ‘statements’, to impress and persuade. In addition, another rhetorical tool identified by Crossley in Chartres cathedral, that of *ductus*, which is movement and direction via repetition, could also be fruitfully paralleled in the use of certain styles of ornamentation in Anglo-Saxon sculpture.

Finally, the concept of memory can open up a whole series of considerations of great significance for Anglo-Saxon architecture. Crossley

⁸ The paper, entitled ‘Rhetoric without Words: Chartres and the “Ductus” of Architecture’, was delivered on 22 February 2010, History of Art Department Research Seminar, University of York. A similar contribution is now in P. Crossley, ‘*Ductus* and *memoria*: Chartres cathedral and the workings of rhetoric’, in *Rhetoric beyond Words*, M. Carruthers (ed.), Cambridge 2010, pp. 214-49; see also, P. Crossley, ‘Medieval architecture and meaning: the limits of iconography’ in *The Burlington Magazine* 130 (1988), pp. 116-21.

⁹ Crossley, ‘Medieval architecture..’, p. 120.

¹⁰ Id. p. 121.

presents memory as a cognitive process which involves not just recalling the details of a place or structure, but categorizing and re-thinking them, linking them in sequences in which they can also interact with other less static elements, like performative liturgy. Crossley uses these notions to suggest different routes for visitors and pilgrims to Chartres: these would use a careful composition of architectural and iconographical elements, supported by the rhetorical concepts mentioned earlier, in order to create a number of possibilities and experiences of the cathedral. Following such observations, it seems that this model of 'rhetorical visual exegesis', theorized for a twelfth-century French cathedral, is entirely valid to discuss and gain insight of Anglo-Saxon monuments, as it has been demonstrated in this work, for instance through the analysis of Ripon and Hexham crypts.¹¹

These ideas could be elaborated within an Anglo-Saxon context with the introduction of an approach hitherto reserved for disciplines such as geography, cartography, behavioural psychology, learning and spatial theories and techniques and, to some extent, art and architecture.¹² Cognitive mapping could offer true and new potential to the study of Anglo-Saxon art and architecture, in specific relation to Roman inspiration. While the term was introduced and is mostly used in the field of psychology, a general definition is that of a mental process based on memory, perception and mental reconstruction of one's experience of the built environment or landscape. While it can also refer to more metaphorical situations, it is relevant in this context in its practical and spatial aspects, and can be equated with seeing with one's 'mind's eye', although not through imagination, but via the recollection of an actual experience. This theoretical construction could be very significant to enhance the study of the Anglo-Saxon modes of contact with Rome and the

¹¹ See *supra*, pp. 225-9.

¹² See for example, *Cognitive Mapping and Spatial Behavior*, R.M. Downs & D. Stea (eds), Chicago, 1973; C.O. Frake, 'Cognitive Maps of Time and Tide among Medieval Seafarers' in *Man* 20 (1985), pp. 254-70; 'Placing the Middle Ages: Contextualizing Towards a Geography of Material Culture', M. Abel & J. Way (eds), in *Peregrinations. Official Publication of the International Society for the Study of Pilgrimage Art* 2.3 (2009), pp. 1-18.

inspiration that they drew from it, as have been explored in this study. In particular, it would certainly prove a successful and original perspective to advance the analysis of Anglo-Saxon pilgrimage to Rome in the early medieval period, and the mental processes with which the real experience of the city – with its monuments, churches, catacombs and topography – was transformed into a cognitive map, one undoubtedly enriched and influenced by the imagination and sensibility, but also pressing needs and agendas, of the individual visitors to Rome, and of the artists and patrons who unfolded and interpreted those mental images to create the Anglo-Saxon churches and monuments that still survive today.