INTRODUCTION

The main focus of this thesis concerns the impact of Rome on the art and architecture of early Christian and Medieval England, drawing on an understanding of the art, architecture and culture of Late Antique and Early Christian Rome, and the Classical world from which they emerged. This involves careful consideration not only of the visual and material culture, but also a critical analysis of the modes of contact between these worlds, the processes of transformation of the visual heritage and identity, and the ideas and forces (political, social and theological) informing those changes.

1. Aims and Objectives

This study is the first synthesis of the influence of the visual culture of early Christian and medieval Rome on the public arts – architecture and sculpture – of early Anglo-Saxon England. Focusing especially on the actual experiences of Anglo-Saxon visitors, it creates a comprehensive and multifaceted picture of Rome, one that will in turn demonstrate to be greatly pervasive in its impact on Anglo-Saxon England. With a truly holistic approach, this study does not privilege single monuments or sites, but strives to reproduce the complexity of early medieval Rome and the number of ways in which it could be interpreted, imitated, revisited and re-imagined in the Anglo-Saxon artistic production. By acknowledging the thoroughness and consistency of a sense of artistic *Romanitas* in Anglo-Saxon England,[1] and by not having to justify its impact on style and iconography, further research questions can be raised, such as issues of continuity, patronage and creative self-awareness.

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[1] The concept of *Romanitas* is fully explored and explained in chapter 5.

2. Parameters of study

2.1 Scholarly approaches

While there is an ever-expanding scholarship on the various aspects discussed in this study, it nevertheless provides the first overview of the influence of Rome in the public arts of Anglo-Saxon England. It thus takes account of the visual landscape of Rome in early Christian times, in order to investigate the nature of the potential models and influences in that landscape, and then identify which of those might have been considered most profound, and how their significance was perceived once they 'travelled' to Anglo-Saxon England. In Anglo-Saxon England itself, the part that such 'Roman' influences played in the interaction, interplay and composition of the public artworks of architecture and sculpture there produced is then considered.

The study of early medieval Rome is one that has, in recent times, yielded a significant body of scholarship, especially in the light of important archaeological excavations and art historical reappraisals.[2] Furthermore, from the seminal work of Levison, first published in 1946,[3] to the more recent work of Ó Carragáin, brought together in 2005,[4] knowledge of the cultural relationships between Rome and Anglo-Saxon England has enjoyed increasing scholarly attention.[5] However, in such studies the focus has often been on a single

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[2] P. Delogu & L. Paroli (eds), *La storia economica di Roma nell'alto Medioevo alla luce dei recenti scavi archeologici*, Firenze 1993; L. Pani Ermini (ed.), *Christiana Loca: lo spazio cristiano nella Roma del primo millennio*, Roma 2000; J.M.H. Smith (ed.), *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West. Essays in Honour of Donald A. Bullough*, Leiden 2000; AA.VV., *Roma dall'Antichità al Medioevo. Archeologia e storia nel Museo Nazionale Romano Crypta Balbi*, Milano 2001; L. Paroli & L. Vendittelli, *Roma dall'Antichità al Medioevo. Vol. 2: Contesti tardoantichi e altomedievali*, Milano 2004; J. Osborne, J. Rasmus Brandt, G. Morganti (eds), *Santa Maria Antiqua al Foro Romano, cento anni dopo. Atti del colloquio internazionale, Roma, 5-6 maggio 2000*, Roma 2004. See also the CISAM publications for 2001 and 2002.

[3] W. Levison, *England and the Continent in the eight century*, London 1946.

[4] Éamonn Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood. Liturgical Images and the Old English Poems of the Dream of the Rood Tradition*, London 2005.

[5] See R. Cramp, 'The Anglo-Saxons and Rome' in *Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland* n.s. 3 (1974), pp. 27-37; J. Lang, 'The apostles in Anglo-Saxon sculpture in the age of Alcuin' in *Early Medieval Europe* 8 (1999), pp. 271-82; 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; J. Hawkes, '*Iuxta Morem Romanorum*: Stone and Sculpture in Anglo-Saxon England' in *Anglo-Saxon*

monument or group of monuments;[6] or on the works under the patronage of a particular ecclesiastical or secular figure;[7] or on consideration of ecclesiastical and theological disputes.[8] In addition, observations on the contacts between Rome and Anglo-Saxon England tend to play only a minor role within wider presentations of the history of Anglo-Saxon England and Europe in general.[9] Within such works, an art historical overview of the relationship between the two regions has never been produced. A study based on a visual analysis of Rome that is not limited to one artistic medium or monument, but exploits the city as a model in its entirety through the lens of Anglo-Saxon contacts and re-interpretations, while also keeping at the forefront issues of politics and patronage, has yet to be written. It is the aim of this study to provide the first attempt at such an overview.

Clearly, this will not be undertaken in the absence of any precedents. Interesting and influential work by Ó Carragáin and Hawkes, for instance, must be considered the starting point for any study of this nature.[10] However, while Hawkes privileges an Anglo-Saxon perspective in her studies of the sculpture and its potential Roman inspirations, this thesis seeks to prioritise the Roman in

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Styles, C.E. Karkov & G. Hardin Brown (eds), Albany 2003, pp. 69-99; Id., '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, pp. 104-14; 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. See also A. Thacker, 'In Search of Saints: the English Church and the Cult of Roman Apostles and Martyrs in the seventh and eighth centuries' in *Early Medieval Rome*, J.M.H. Smith (ed.), pp. 247-77; Id. 'Rome of the Martyrs. Saints, Cults and Relics, Fourth to Seventh Centuries' in *Roma Felix: Formation and Reflections of Medieval Rome*, É. Ó Carragáin & C. Neuman de Vegvar (eds), Aldershot 2007, pp. 13-49.

[6] See above, fn. 3-4.

[7] See for instance D.P. Kirby (ed.), *Saint Wilfrid at Hexham*, Newcastle upon Tyne 1974; M. Lapidge (ed.), *Archbishop Theodore: commemorative studies on his life and influence*, Cambridge 1995;

[8] See C. Cubitt, 'Pastoral care and conciliar canons: the provisions of the 747 Council of *Clofesho*' in *Pastoral Care Before the Parish*, J.Blair & R.Sharpe (eds), Leicester 1992, pp. 193-211; Id., 'Unity and diversity in the early Anglo-Saxon liturgy' in *Studies in Church History* 36 (1996), pp. 45-57; 'The clergy in early Anglo-Saxon England' in *Historical Research* 78 (2005), pp. 273-87; 'The Lateran Council of 649 as an Ecumenical Council' in *Chalcedon in Context. Church Councils 400-700*, R. Price & M. Whitby (eds), Liverpool 2008, pp. 133-47.

[9] See J.M.H. Smith, *Europe after Rome: a new cultural history 500-1000*, Oxford 2005; C. Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome. A history of Europe from 400 to 1000*, London 2009.

[10] See above, fn. 4-5.

order to create a genesis and living context for those artistically significant models, which then travelled to Anglo-Saxon England where their adaptations, interpretations and transformations can be identified. Ó Carragáin's work, on the other hand, springs from his deep engagement with one particular monument, the eighth-century cross at Ruthwell (Dumfriesshire), which motivates and generates his compelling study of Rome and Roman/Anglo-Saxon interaction. With such focus, his work does not claim to represent an overview or introduction, but rather presents a selection of Anglo-Saxon material which is viewed in relation to the Northumbrian monument. Likewise, although Hawkes' work has focused on a series of monuments, and points to the relevant Roman comparative material and frames of reference, it does not provide a full picture of the complex Roman reality.

The debt to earlier and current scholarship is to be fully acknowledged, while it also demonstrates that there is a sufficiently significant body of knowledge that allows the scattered evidence to be brought together in a single study which, although not exhaustive, can nevertheless provide a thorough and up-to-date scholarly basis for further investigation.

2.2 Chronological timeframe

It is necessary to outline the reasoning behind the temporal boundaries set in this work. A study based essentially on the impact of the Christian artistic heritage of the city of Rome must inevitably start from consideration of the process of transformation that Rome underwent following the official Christianization of the Empire. Thus, this thesis opens with an examination of the Constantinian period, and the intellectual and theological preoccupations of the Emperor and his circle in creating an official imperial and Christian language for the monumental face of Rome. It is less straightforward, however, to identify the most logical point of departure when considering the 'outer' extreme of that Empire. Although the artistic legacy of Roman Britain surely constitutes a part of the Anglo-Saxon picture, the scarcity of securely dated

evidence for the post-Roman period provides very few reliable points on which to build a chronology. Nevertheless, in this study of the impact of Rome on the public arts of the Anglo-Saxons, some of the material which needs to be taken into account must include that which pre-dates the Gregorian-Augustinian mission of re-conversion in Anglo-Saxon England in 597.

Returning to Rome, at the other end of the spectrum, it has been deemed prudent to stop before the opening of the Carolingian 'season': commencing with Pope Stephen II (752-7), the Frankish involvement in the political and economical life of Rome becomes palpable, and so are the consequences for both the art and architecture of the city. Although some documents from the second half of the eighth and early ninth century will be considered, and although the church of Santa Maria Antiqua – an integral part of the research on Rome – was abandoned only in 847, a watershed in the first half of the eight century provides the most coherent end bracket of this study. Information concerning the material culture of Anglo-Saxon England is more difficult to decipher and date, and a fixed chronology is hard to establish. It is worth emphasizing at this point that evidence, over and above dating concerns and especially for the figural sculpture, is extremely scarce and thus a certain flexibility has been necessary and some material of possibly early ninth century date has been included. However, with very few such exceptions, the Anglo-Saxon buildings and monuments relevant to this discussion are concentrated in the seventh to mid-eighth century.

2.3 The materials

It is also important here to outline the rationale informing the type of artistic material privileged in this study, and the potential reasons for excluding evidence which might be considered equally significant. For instance, portable objects, like manuscripts, metalwork and ivories, do not feature largely in this discussion. The role of portable objects in the transmission and transformation of ideas of *Romanitas* to Anglo-Saxon England has been widely discussed and

appreciated,[11] and the body of evidence available is considerable and well-known. In itself this could provide sufficient reason to focus attention on non-portable objects, like buildings and monuments, but further observations can be made. Portable objects can be understood to have engendered inspiration and responses arising primarily from direct observation and imitation of certain forms, images, motifs and iconographical constructs; such responses can be considered inherently dissimilar to those elicited by monuments and buildings. Focusing on non-portable sources of Roman influence allows investigation of a completely different set of stimuli, based mainly on the symbolic significance of certain images within their specific setting, or on the location of certain buildings and their interaction with the surrounding landscape, rather than considering issues of style and rendering. In this lies the main reason for such a selective use of the evidence.

2.4 'Periodisation'

This project is situated at a crossroads of different disciplines and historiographical debates, exemplified by such chronological labels as 'Late Antiquity' and 'Early Middle Ages', as well as cultural and ethnic definitions like 'Romano-British' and 'Anglo-Saxon'.[12] Scholarship of the past generation or two has brought great attention to the growing and hugely successful field of

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[11] On manuscripts and literary sources see R.L.S. Bruce-Mitford, *The Art of the 'Codex Amiatinus'*, Jarrow Lecture 1967; P.J. Nordhagen, *The 'Codex Amiatinus' and the Byzantine element in the Northumbrian renaissance*, Jarrow Lecture 1977; J. O'Reilly, 'The Library of Scripture: Views from Vivarium and Wearmouth-Jarrow' in *New Offerings, Ancient Treasures. Studies in Medieval Art for George Henderson*, P. Binski & W. Noel (eds), Stroud 2001, pp. 3-39; see also, T.J. Brown, 'An historical introduction to the use of classical Latin authors in the British Isles from the fifth to the eleventh century' in CISAM 1974, pp. 237-99. On portable objects see J. Hawkes, '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.

[12] For the different dating of these periods according to different disciplines and relevant debate see C. Ando, 'Decline, Fall and Transformation' in *Journal of Late Antiquity* 1 (2008), pp. 31-60; in the same volume see also the articles by A. Marcone, 'A Long Late Antiquity? Considerations on a Controversial Period', pp. 4-19 and E. James, 'The Rise and Function of the Concept "Late Antiquity"', pp. 20-30. See also A. Gillett, 'Rome's Fall and Europe Rise: a View from Late Antiquity' in *The Medieval Review* (2007), pp. 1-41.

Late Antique studies.[13] However, especially in the field of art history, the late antique and early medieval period – with their perceived main features and geographical areas of influence – still seem to be sharply separate and independent areas of study.[14] In addition, when working with Anglo-Saxon artistic material, its affiliation with the 'Germanic' element is often emphasized at the expense of possible links with the Late Antique period.[15]

These issues are usually discussed in relation to the controversial topic of the 'end' of Roman Britain.[16] In this context it is essential to underline that, whatever interpretation is invoked to explain the material conditions of post-Roman Britain (decline of trade, monetary-based economy, and urban life), it seems that certain cultural aspects, like the use of Latin language and literature and – more recently – the spread of Christianity, associated with a Roman life-style were maintained and perhaps even enhanced, implying that Romano-British self-perceptions were still very much imbued with classical *Romanitas*. While such an approach seems to clash with the undeniable scarcity of securely datable archaeological material – which makes it difficult to articulate an overall

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[13] The work of Peter Brown must be considered seminal, although it needs to be contextualized within the works of his predecessor and mentor A. Momigliano; the well-known 'Pirenne Thesis' was also of fundamental importance for the establishment of a revised chronology and interpretation of the early Middle Ages. See P. Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity AD 150-750*, London 1971; Id., *The Making of Late Antiquity*, Cambridge 1978; Id., *The Cult of Saints. Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, Chicago 1981; Id., *The Rise of Western Christendom. Triumph and Diversity, AD 200-1000*, Oxford 1996 (2nd revised ed. Oxford 2003). For a critical reappraisal of Brown's school of thought see B. Ward-Perkins, *The fall of Rome: and the end of civilization*, Oxford 2005, pp. 1-10.

[14] Ando, pp. 33-40.

[15] Gillett, pp. 10-16.

[16] General overviews are S.S. Frere, *Britannia: a history of Roman Britain*, London 1987 (3rd ed.); P. Salway, *Roman Britain*, Oxford 1981; on the end of Roman Britain see P. J. Casey, *The End of Romain Britain*, BAR British Series 71 (1979); R. Reece, *My Roman Britain*, Cirencester 1988; A.S. Esmonde Cleary, *The Ending of Roman Britain*, London 1989; N. Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, London 1992; N. Faulkner, *The Decline and Fall of Roman Britain*, Stroud 2000; K. Dark, *Britain and the End of the Roman Empire*, Stroud 2000; see also *Celt and Saxon: Studies in the Early British Border*, N.K. Chadwick (ed.), Cambridge 1963; *Christianity in Britain, 300-700: papers presented to the Conference on Christianity in Roman and sub-Roman Britain*, M.W.Barley & R.P.C. Hanson (eds), Leicester 1968; D.Dumville, 'Sub-Roman Britain: History and Legend' in *History* n.s. 62 (1977), pp. 173-93; J.F. Matthews, 'Macsen, Maximus and Constantine' in *Welsh History Review* 11 (1983), pp. 431-48; I. Wood, 'The end of Roman Britain: continental evidence and parallels' in *Gildas: New Approaches*, M. Lapidge & D. Dumville (eds), Woodbridge 1984, pp. 1-21.

understanding of the period – it also raises the question of the role of Bede in constructing a historical and ideological Christian framework of Anglo-Saxon England. An understanding of Bede's agenda is fundamental to this work, as it not only provided the Anglo-Saxon intellectual milieu which functioned as a background to the production of public arts, but also impacted the perception of *Romanitas* in Anglo-Saxon England by subsequent, modern scholarship.[17]

Through his extensive range of works, Bede created an Anglo-Saxon past fully integrated with Imperial and Christian Rome, with the aim of articulating a largely favourable image of this Rome; he sought to synthesize the wide-ranging influences at play in his society in general, and in the Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical and monastic world more in particular. His historical works especially were part of a tradition which incorporated Roman Imperial history in the wider frame of the birth of Christianity.[18] Within this frame Bede carved a role for Anglo-Saxon England, emphasizing the fact that it had received conversion and unity from the Church of Rome rather than Imperial Rome, placing the Anglo-Saxons in direct contact with the Church of Rome – heir of

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[17] See P.H. Blair, *The World of Bede*, London 1970; *Famulus Christi: essays in commemoration of the thirteenth centenary of the birth of the Venerable Bede*, G. Bonner (ed.), London 1976; B. Ward, *The Venerable Bede*, London 1998; *Innovation and Tradition in the writings of the Venerable Bede*, S. DeGregorio (ed.), Morgantown 2006; N.J. Higham, *(Re-)reading Bede: the Ecclesiastical History in context*, London 2006; G.H. Brown, *A Companion to Bede*, Woodbridge 2009; *The Cambridge Companion to Bede*, S. DeGregorio (ed.), Cambridge 2010; see also the ongoing Jarrow Lectures series, those from 1958 to 1993 have been collected in *Bede and his world: the Jarrow lectures*, 2 vols., Aldershot 1994.

[18] See C.W. Jones, 'Bede as Early Medieval Historian' in *Medievalia et Humanistica* 4 (1946), pp. 26-36; D.P. Kirby, 'Bede's Native Sources for the *Historia Ecclesiastica*' in *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 48 (1966), 341-71; P.H. Blair, 'The Historical Writings of Bede' in CISAM 17 (1970), pp. 197-221; R.A. Markus, 'Church History and Church Historians' in *Studies in Church History* 11 (1974), pp.1-17; M. Miller, 'Bede's Use of Gildas' in *English Historical Review* 90 (1975), pp. 241-61; L.W. Barnard, 'Bede and Eusebius as Church Historians' in *Famulus Christi*, pp. 106-24; J.N. Stephens, 'Bede's Ecclesiastical History' in *History* 62 (1977), pp. 1-14; E.A. Thompson, 'Gildas and the History of Britain' in *Britannia* 10 (1979), pp. 203-26; R. Ray, 'Bede's *Vera Lex Historiae*' in *Speculum* 55 (1980), pp.1-21; J. Davidse, 'The Sense of the Past in the Works of the Venerable Bede' in *Studi Medievali*, 3rd ser. 23 (1982), pp. 647-95; D.P. Kirby, 'Bede, Eddius Stephanus and the *Life of Wilfrid*' in English Historical Review 98 (1983), pp.101-14; W. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550-800). Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon*, Princeton 1988; H. Mayr-Harting, 'Bede's Patristic Thinking as an Historian' in *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, A. Scharer & G. Scheibelreiter (eds), Wien 1994, pp. 367-74; J. Davidse, 'On Bede as Christian Historian' in *Beda Venerabilis: Historian, Monk & Northumbrian*, L.A.J.R. Houwen & A.A. MacDonald (eds), Groningen 1996, pp. 1-15.

the Constantinian conversion – without the need of any intermediary. The *Romanitas* invoked by Bede had nothing to do with the Romano-British past or their role in forging material, artistic and intellectual links with Rome. Bede intentionally created such a picture to minimize the impact of the pre-existing Romano-British Christianity, emphasizing by contrast the Anglo-Saxons as the only possible and legitimate heir to Rome, the only people who could claim a connection with the Roman past and so share a new Roman 'ecclesiastical' present. His didactic or providential history merged with the history of a *gens*, its conversion and its place in an *ecclesia*, a spiritual community, a process that was spread, controlled and unified by the Church of Rome. In addition, the geographical marginality of the region endowed the conversion and redemption of the Anglo-Saxons with a marked sense of completion in the human history of salvation.[19]

It is clear that such a perspective had an impact on the treatment of any Romano-British material; the previous scholarship has tended to downplay the historic and cultural role of post-Roman Britain and the impact of the potential pre-existing evidence. This in turn contributed to the research on Roman and post-Roman Britain and Anglo-Saxon England as two discrete and almost independent 'phases', while it also accentuated the inclination to interpret the two 'phases' in strong ethnic terms.[20] However, as will become apparent, although the Anglo-Saxons' aspirations to reinterpret patterns of *Romanitas* were certainly inspired by the papal mission of re-conversion in the course of the seventh century – and by direct experience of Rome – this occurred in combination with a Roman (and Romano-British) past already present on the

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[19] J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Gregory of Tours and Bede: their qualities on personal qualities of kings' in *Frümittelalterliche Studien* 2 (1968), pp. 31-44; J.T. Rosenthal, 'Bede's Use of Miracles' in *Traditio* 31 (1975), pp. 328-35; S. DeGregorio, 'The Venerable Bede on Prayer and Contemplation' in *Traditio* 54 (1999), pp. 1-39; G. Tugene, *L'image de la nation anglaise dans 'l'Histoire Ecclésiastique' de Bède le Vénérable*, Strasbourg 2001; S. DeGregorio, '*Nostrorum Socordiam Temporum*: the Reforming Impulse of Bede's Later Exegesis' in *Early Medieval Europe* 11 (2002), pp. 107-122; Id., 'Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam* and the Reform of the Northumbrian Church' in *Speculum* 79 (2004), pp. 1-25; J. Moorhead, 'Bede on the Papacy' in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 60 (2009), pp. 217-32.

[20] See supra, fn 15.

island. More work clearly needs to be undertaken, in order to fully assess the role of post-Roman Britain in channelling and keeping alive ideas and structures of *Romanitas*.

By using the concept of Roman inspiration as a research tool – and by including in the discussion the Romano-British impact and the related pre-existing material evidence – the connection of Anglo-Saxon art with the Classical and post-Classical Antiquity can be reaffirmed and strengthened, without having to explain such phenomena as the result of an early medieval Carolingian *renovatio*.[21] This creates a more flowing and coherent narrative of cultural continuity.

To achieve this, the analysis of the transformation of imperial Rome into Christian Rome presented here[22] will be combined with full consideration of the political, theological and social pressures associated with the different groups active within Rome during the process of Christianization, and the ways in which these groups shared in the exercise of power and control. As will be seen, the use of religious architecture to mark their presence on the landscape of the city make this phase of Roman history analogous – to a certain extent – with the late sixth-and seventh-century Insular world.

As noted, the extent to which such comparisons can be supported is often deemed debatable, particularly when most of the historical works dealing with the Roman, post-Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods in the British Isles accept that the degree of disruption in economic, social and political life following the 'fall' of the Roman Empire was extensive. In this respect, the work of Ward-Perkins on the fall of Rome is probably the most significant,[23] and has rightly sparked considerable debate. While his stance is intentionally controversial, his argument is nevertheless compelling in criticizing the overarching tendency of recent scholarship to invoke an increasing degree of transformation and

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[21] See L. Nees, 'Carolingian Art and Politics' in *The Gentle Voice of teachers: Aspects of Learning in the Carolingian Age*, R.E. Sullivan (ed.), Columbus 1995, pp. 186-226.

[22] See infra, chapter 1.

[23] See supra, fn 13.

accommodation of the Roman and post-Roman populations in dealing with the barbarian invasions. As part of this argument Ward-Perkins has vested the concept of a Late Antique period with the function of a cultural panacea hiding a disastrous reality. While it is undeniable that the 'end' of the Roman Empire in the West and the emergence of the successor states brought with it a drastic and often dramatic simplification of society, it is also true, as LeGoff has most notably pointed out, that change does not always imply decline or a complete rupture with the heritage of the past.[24] This perspective has had an impact not only on historical scholarship, but also on art historical discussion, a field that has seen the rapid and welcome rejection of approaches such as Berenson's 'The Arch of Constantine, or The Decline of Form', of 1954.[25]

In addition, when considering the diverse and relatively Romanized groups that played a part in the reorganization of post-Imperial Europe, it must be acknowledged that cultural, linguistic and social aspects had a considerable impact on defining their identities and sense of affiliation, and contributed to a situation in which the boundaries between invaders and invaded were often malleable. Indeed, even in Ward-Perkins' critical construction there is awareness of the fact that, when studying cultural phenomena, the 'fall of Rome' cannot be considered as a useful and inflexible watershed. Furthermore, it is important to underline that the city of Rome itself did not usually conform to the general trends, historical or artistic, but as it held a special position within the Empire and in post-Imperial Europe, Roman material is probably best considered on a case by case basis.

With this in mind, it could be proposed that reaching an understanding of artistic 'Romanness' in early Anglo-Saxon England is essential in establishing the ways in which it is possible – or not – to include post-Roman Britain in the

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[24] J. Le Goff, *La civilisation de l'Occident médiéval*, Paris 1964 [English transl. by J. Barrow, *Medieval Civilization, 400-1500*, Oxford 1988.]

[25] B. Berenson, *The Arch of Constantine: or, the Decline of the Form*, London 1954.

discourse on Late Antiquity.[26] While the Late Antique can be appreciated in relation with what came before and after, in a system of interaction, influences, responses and reworking of ideas and models, it cannot be defined only through change, disruption and difference. Art cannot be 'labelled' Late Antique only in terms of the extent to which it can be compared and measured against the Classical. At the same time, the label 'Carolingian' needs also to be applied with care to avoid implying a sudden, temporal leap backwards, to a perceived classical *Romanitas* which sweeps away the intervening four centuries. Only by negating the tendency to depict the Late Antique as a period of lingering, waning models is it possible to fully understand the impact of Romanness in Anglo-Saxon England, and to appreciate the originality and unique nature of the Anglo-Saxon reinterpretations of the material. Late Antique and Early Medieval Christian Art are thus here studied in their own right, and not by considering the extent to which they were close to (or far from) a 'Classical' heritage, which still tends to be perceived as the appropriate benchmark against which all other forms of art are to be measured. At the same time, it is only by having a clear idea of the interrelation of Late Antique and Early Medieval art with the Classical, that the complex and multilayered significance of Late Antique and Early Medieval monuments, artefacts and decoration can be fully understood. In the present study this has been achieved by emphasizing the strength and importance of an established and original Anglo-Saxon artistic creativity and iconographical complexity, in which the Roman influence – originating from the Romano-British inheritance, the intellectual framework created by Bede, and the real contacts with the city of Rome itself – acted as powerful source of inspiration eliciting a variety of responses.

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[26] To achieve this, it is also important to moderate/reduce the long-standing prominence of the 'Continental' influence (i.e. Francia), usually invoked to explain the majority of 'non-Germanic' Anglo-Saxon artistic production.

3. Structure of the study

Having outlined the general issues taken into account in defining the parameters of this work, it is now necessary to consider the manner in which the thesis and its evidence has been ordered and structured. Overall, the thesis is divided into two main parts: the first is devoted to Rome, in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the Christian structures and features potentially available to Anglo-Saxon viewers within their historical and topographical contexts; the second deals with Anglo-Saxon England, and creates active links between the monuments of Rome previously discussed and those produced in Anglo-Saxon England.

As already mentioned, the discussion will open with the establishment of the Christian faith within the Roman Empire under Constantine. In doing this, the picture includes not only the imperial foundations, but also those independent from imperial patronage, especially the Roman titular churches, which constituted an embryonic frame of a capillary 'parish' system distributed across the city. From this, the impact of schismatic groups and the role of the Pope as one of the rising protagonists in supporting and controlling church building activities can also be discussed.

Having outlined such a background, in architectural, cultural and political terms, a series of early medieval written sources, the so-called 'itineraries', which focus specifically on those churches that pilgrims to Rome deemed worthy of a visit will be examined.[27] The fact that some of the manuscripts preserving such texts are of Anglo-Saxon provenance underline the potential knowledge, not only of the texts, but also of the Roman sites mentioned. These itineraries further highlight the importance, in this analysis of early medieval Rome, of the catacombs and extra-mural churches. Here, a second type of written evidence is introduced, the catacomb graffiti, in particular those left by Anglo-Saxons.[28] For the first time in the scholarship these will be considered as

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[27] See infra, pp. 67-81.
[28] See infra, pp. 81-101.

central to the artistic process of transmission of models from Rome to Anglo-Saxon England. In the light of this, catacomb decoration is here given the same degree of consideration in terms of its potential artistic influence as the more often discussed mosaics and frescoes in the 'main' basilicas and churches. The catacombs are thus fully integrated into the portrayal of what Rome offered foreign viewers: their paintings are not considered in isolation, but on a par with the most renowned examples of Roman early medieval art.

Following this, in building up the picture of the sites potentially encountered by Anglo-Saxon visitors to Rome, is the evidence of assistential structures: *diaconiae*, *xenodochia* and *scholae*,[29] and the churches which originated from them, were in all likelihood among the buildings known by Anglo-Saxons in Rome. These are considered in the context of architectural continuity and reuse of Roman structures, which would have had an impact on how they were perceived visually; at the same time they are re-assessed, not so much in terms of their presumed monastic function, but rather with a particular attention to their location and possible decorative schemes.

The last chapter of the 'Roman' section is dedicated to the church of Santa Maria Antiqua.[30] Consideration of this church provides another example of the revised use of evidence which constitutes the core of this project, which in turn allows a full exploration of the process of construction of the artistic framework of early medieval Rome. Santa Maria Antiqua is not considered exclusively for its wealth of frescoes, but more broadly for the political and intellectual milieu of its decoration and the importance of its patronage. This re-contextualization of Santa Maria Antiqua and the emphasis on its centrality in the political and ecclesiastical life of seventh- and early eighth-century Rome highlight the ways in which this particular building would have been key to Anglo-Saxon visitors to Rome, and so indicate what an important source of inspiration its decorative schemes may have been to them.

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[29] For a definition of these institutions see infra, chapter 3.

[30] See infra, chapter 4.

Having established the Roman context, the second part of the thesis moves on to examine Anglo-Saxon England in the light of this evidence. Here, the discussion centres on a substantial corpus of material, churches and architecture, followed by stone sculpture. This vast body of evidence is discussed systematically, albeit selectively, in order to focus on the different ways in which it is possible to identify the impact of *Romanitas* and to provide relevant examples. Throughout, correlations are drawn between the Anglo-Saxon and Roman material, in order to underline the processes of inspiration and the means by which they could have travelled. In addition, evidence pre-dating the Gregorian mission will be fully considered in the discussion, in order to demonstrate the actual presence of pre-existing Roman material in the landscape. This would have provided the Anglo-Saxons with a strong element of continuity and awareness of a *Romanitas* distinct and complementary to that seen and experienced in Rome. Remains of thermal baths, military and civic settlements, sarcophagi and sculpture contribute to the creation of a picture in which the pre-existence of Rome is recognized and included.

When discussing Anglo-Saxon churches and stone monuments, they are not analyzed on a one-to-one basis, and only in very few cases is a direct comparison established or suggested for a monument as a whole. Drawing on the evidence in terms of the elements in the process of inspiration, such as architectural features or motifs, locations or monumental forms, allows for an understanding of the various aspects in which an intentional sense of *Romanitas* can be identified and invoked, rather than using said evidence to create a classification of buildings, monuments or motifs. Paradoxically, fragmentation of the material offers a more holistic approach, by which it is possible to demonstrate the pervasive and powerful nature of Roman influence in the context of early Anglo-Saxon artistic production.

This approach also has the interesting effect of underlining the extent to which the connections between Anglo-Saxon art and Classical/Late Antique sources of inspiration and iconography rest primarily on political, intellectual,

and theological statements made through the medium of art. Nevertheless, emphasis on the imaginative and original ways in which Anglo-Saxon art achieved such interpretations almost demands a revaluation of its self-sufficient, independent and creative status. Thus, one of the most notable and rewarding results of this study is the fact that, by concentrating on the Anglo-Saxon 'imitation' of Rome, the extraordinarily new and forcefully multifaceted nature of early Anglo-Saxon art is instead demonstrated.

Today, the Order of the Mass includes a prayer, said after the gifts are received at the altar and prior to the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The closing statement is: 'Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this wine to offer, *fruit of the vine and work of human hands. It will become our spiritual drink*'. Although this particular formula does not belong to the early medieval liturgy,[31] it seems nevertheless to comment appropriately and symbolically on the outcome of this study. Anglo-Saxon monuments are imbued with manifold layers of Christian art heritage, and the multiple symbolic meanings dictated by theological, liturgical and iconographical requirements, are the '*fruit of the vine*'; however, they only became their '*spiritual drink*' through the '*work of human hands*', the painstaking work and dedication of generations of Anglo-Saxon sculptors, masons, architects, artists and pilgrims, under the patronage of powerful and demanding ecclesiastics and nobles. To all of them scholars should probably give more credit.

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[31] It seems that, in the earlier form of liturgy, the prayers '*super oblata*' were made in silence, hence the name *secreta*; it would be interesting to further explore this point. See the Catholic Encyclopaedia, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11217a.htm and http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13673b.htm (accessed March 2010).