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Liminal Images

Aspects of Medieval Architectural Sculpture in the South of England from the Eleventh to the Sixteenth Centuries

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ABSTRACT

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LIMINAL IMAGES: ASPECTS OF MEDIEVAL ARCHITECTURAL SCULPTURE IN THE SOUTH OF ENGLAND FROM THE ELEVENTH TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURIES

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To understand the architectural sculpture of medieval religious buildings as fully as possible it must be set within its architectural, social and religious contexts. I argue that medieval religious buildings, as institutionalized points of contact with the sacred, were perceived as liminal spaces – where the everyday world overlapped with the supernatural realms of saints, angels and demons. Embedded into the fabric of the church and thereby identified with it, and rarely following any particular patterns of placement, architectural sculpture presented a visual evocation of liminality through its use of some of the key techniques of grotesque art, for example, hybridity, distortion, exaggeration, and replication. These images drew attention to the space articulated by the building as similarly ambiguous and unclassifiable, ideas well-suited to its role as God's house on earth. Liminal locations are, however, dangerous as well as potent and merit some form of protection from the potentially malefic energy of the sacred. Medieval architectural sculpture therefore has an apotropaic purpose as well; identification of liminal space and protection from it are perhaps its two most fundamental aspects. Imagery considered effective apotropaia is also highly esteemed, which may reflect its prolific use on high status buildings. Thus, "grotesque" images, rather than an aberrant feature of medieval religious art, are instead entirely appropriate. Close analysis of various aspects of the imagery reveals a resistance to definitive interpretation and permeability of meanings, substantiating the idea that these were intentionally liminal images.

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Introduction

Between the eleventh and the sixteenth centuries some distinctive forms of sculpture develop upon and within European ecclesiastical buildings. These share two characteristic features. First, rather than standing as semi-separate pieces in more prominent locations, they embellish key architectural elements such as corbels, roof bosses and capitals. Second, their imagery presents what has been called 'a kind of back-current of art' that runs 'counter to the ordinary motives of human beauty' (Prior and Gardner, 1912: 241). This is because these images crowd with bulbous vegetation, frantic animals, distorted heads, impossible hybrids, unidentifiable beasts, mythical creatures, acrobats, fools, musicians, exhibitionist figures, and domestic as well as some biblical scenes. Secular and authoritative ecclesiastical figures such as kings, queens and bishops are also represented.

Selecting an appropriate descriptive term with which to discuss this type of sculpture is fraught with problems. "Ornamental" has been used, particularly in the nineteenth century (e.g. Jones, 1982 [1856]; Ward, 1899), but as a label tends to carry connotations of superficiality. This does not fit with either the widespread presence of these images or their typical location upon crucial structural components of religious buildings, neither of which suggest that they were considered insignificant to the communities and individuals that paid for and created them. Further, the term generally signifies 'art with a decorative rather than a significative function' (Harpham, 1982: 32) and so precludes any search for possible meanings.

The term currently favoured by medieval art historians is "marginal" (e.g. Camille, 1992; Kenaan-Kedar, 1992, 1995). This has been popularised by work upon illuminated manuscripts (e.g. Randall 1957, 1960, 1962, 1966a, 1966b, 1972) in which hybrid creatures and satirical scenes appear around the central text, literally in the margins, and frequently punning upon certain words. This distinctive kind of imagery, together with its peripheral location bears many similarities to that found

carved upon churches and consequently the use of the term has been extended to include sculpture.

This is not without complications. Certainly, these carvings often occur in what may be called marginal locations but unlike manuscript images this often makes them difficult to see; the architectural "margins" can include places that are some distance from the ground as well as areas of naturally low light. It is frequently the case that even with binoculars 'the observer on the ground is often unable to identify the sculpted images clearly' (Kenaan-Kedar, 1995: 1). We must also consider that access to certain areas of an ecclesiastical building was often restricted to clerics, so some images may have been viewed only by a select audience. Even those images that could potentially be seen by all the users of the building would have been viewed in social contexts far removed from the leisurely contemplation of a book. Such differences between the creation and viewing of two-dimensional and three-dimensional images makes the use of the term marginal for both manuscript drawings and sculpture potentially confusing. Not only does it imply that the latter may be "read" in a similar manner to the former but it ignores the different ways in which sculpted images may have been experienced as well as the context in which they were seen, half-seen or glimpsed, and by whom (Sekules, 1995: 38).

"Marginal" flounders for other reasons when applied to architectural rather than textual images. At the heart of the problem is an uncertainty over definition: is it context, content, or both context *and* content that defines marginal sculpture? If the physical structure of a building is taken to be its "edges" then we must assume, with Phillip Lindley, that all architectural sculpture is inevitably marginal (1995: 76). However, Lindley draws a distinction between the interior and exterior of buildings for he considers carved capitals to be an exception, presumably because as a common interior feature they cannot be considered architecturally peripheral. This view, that the carvings on the "shell" of the building may be considered marginal as opposed to those within the space it articulates, might suggest that there is a notable difference between the content of the carvings in these two areas. The sculptures themselves, however, do not support such a dichotomy.

Further, to draw a distinction between official, religious art (e.g. biblical scenes, images of Christ and the Saints) and unofficial, marginal (and therefore, as it is often assumed, non-religious) art runs the risk of creating a false division. Religious life today, for the majority of people living in the West, may well be distanced from everyday activities, but this is unlikely to have been the case for the medieval period when the Church stood at the centre of community life (Pounds, 2000: 340). Moreover, a great deal of so-called marginal sculpture represents "official" subjects, as the sequences of corbels depicting the heads of kings and bishops that can be found in many Wiltshire churches (e.g. Bishop's Cannings, Calne, Oaksey, Wilsford) makes plain. The marginal analogies must, therefore, be pursued with care. Certainly, these are not images of marginal importance to medieval history. Despite their curious subject matter, generally capricious style and often difficult location 'we are not looking at marginal or strange rarities, but at a fundamental feature of medieval art and an integral part of medieval man's perception of reality' (Gurevich, 1988: 181; see also Mermier, 1977: 110). Michael Camille once commented that marginal is a 'difficult term' for exactly these reasons[1] and indeed, at a broader level the concept of marginal art 'is virtually indefinable, having been given a variety of incommensurable meanings' (Kuspit, 1996: 19). Some writers have avoided the term altogether, preferring instead the more neutral "architectural sculpture" (Alford, 1984; Lane, 1997), and it is in their footsteps that I follow here.

Yet until recently the study of medieval architectural art had itself been marginalised by conventional art and architectural histories. Historically, its study runs concurrent with the development of photography. Although architectural historians gifted with the ability to make high-quality drawings had published their work (e.g. Cotton, 1900) photography allowed a greater ease and accuracy of viewing images situated in dark or distant locations. Archaeologists concerned with roof bosses were quick to see the advantages and it is to them that credit is due for much pioneering work (e.g. Prideaux and Shafto, 1910; Rose-Troup, 1922; Cave, 1927, 1934, 1935, 1948).

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[1] Personal communication, 12/6/2001.

Increasingly, both archaeologists and art historians could no longer claim to be ignorant of the presence of a powerful range of medieval carvings, yet prejudice mitigated against their serious study. This found expression in two main areas. The first was aesthetic – the response to the subject matter and style of the image; the second hermeneutic – the attempt to interpret or explain that image (Kenaan-Kedar [1995: 2] has similar criticisms). Both were and are closely interwoven.

First, the subject matter and style of medieval architectural sculpture has generally failed to conform to institutional definitions of art. Even after primitivism had become acceptable as a legitimate style in Western art during the first half of the twentieth century, these anonymously produced and repetitive carvings were often read as crude in comparison with the more detailed and highly worked images produced during the later Middle Ages and Renaissance (Caviness, 1989). Why this should be so may be understood more fully if we consider the circumstances surrounding the creation of the modern art world. During the late eighteenth century the power of elite institutions such as museums, galleries and their patrons meant that 'art' came to be defined through subscription to a particular aesthetic canon (Staniszewski, 1995). This excluded or distanced itself from the corporeal for only 'a cerebral pleasure purified of eroticism…[could] elevate the aesthete or critic above the masses' (Jones, 1993: 393). Medieval architectural sculpture, with its "folk" images suggestive of a potent supernatural and potentially socially threatening force that allowed bodies to multiply and outgrow their natural limits, fleshy vegetation to sprout out of heads and faces, and figures of authority to be mocked, was consequently viewed as dubious. These were troublesome images, at the 'borders of sanctioned enquiry' (Cohen, 1994: 1).

Exclusion from the academy has had both positive and negative ramifications for the study of medieval architectural sculpture. Since it has so rarely been accorded much importance it has attracted a wide variety of interesting, yet often inappropriate, methods of analysis. Conventional art historical enquiry relies upon documentation for much of its information, and throughout the late nineteenth and most of the twentieth century many of these images were classified by reference to manuscripts.

For many, only a tenuous link existed. Those images which could not be categorised in such a manner reinforced the idea that they were meaningless, thus missing the social context of the imagery among a non-literate, memory-based culture in which texts were not widely circulated or available (Carruthers, 1990: 8).

The inability to explain so many of the sculptures found in and on medieval religious buildings by the usual methods suggested that the carvings were not entirely directed by the clergy as had been previously thought. Thus entered the idea that those images without any discernible biblical or moral message represented the coarse humour of the masons (e.g. Anderson, 1938). With this argument, however, art historians entered an interpretative twilight zone. On the one hand these might be seen as didactic sculptures potent with (as yet undeciphered) religious meaning. On the other they were meaningless doodles created by illiterate builders. Although this latter argument helped to explain their often visually restricted position (they were generally out of sight because they were meaningless) it did not explain their creation in the first place. Those who did make the association between the grotesque content and the world of the stonemason or woodcarver generally romanticised their "childlike" labour or perpetuated the idea of primitive, uncultured hands feebly attempting to copy the clarity of manuscript illustrations. Medieval architectural sculpture stood apart, uncompromising in its ability to resist interpretation. Anonymously carved, often hidden from view yet repeated frequently enough to suggest that it was not considered inessential decoration; integral to the very structure of Christian churches yet perpetuating "pagan" imagery, it presented a fluid, dynamic world in which the sacred was mocked and the abnormal flaunted.

Although recent work has been more imaginative in its appraisal of medieval architectural sculpture (e.g. Camille, 1992) and more rooted in contemporary concerns with patronage and production (e.g. Sekules, 1995), in many respects little has changed. Work on marginal imagery in medieval manuscripts tends to obscure essential differences between sculpted and painted images. Illuminated manuscripts were often created for the private use of specific patrons who could and did contemplate their pages in their entirety. Architectural sculpture, however, 'public yet

mostly hidden from observers – must have had a different rationale from the margins of illuminations plainly observable by their private owners' (Kenaan-Kedar, 1995: 3).

Outline of the Thesis

My aim in this thesis is to reconsider medieval architectural sculpture by setting it firmly within its social, architectural, and religious contexts. An interdisciplinary approach is necessary, blending folklore, archaeology and art history, and using approaches to the material drawn from literature, art and archaeology.

The work is divided into three sections, each section composed of three chapters. The concern of the first section is to establish a context for the imagery upon which the latter two sections may then draw. Chapter 1 explores in greater detail than is possible here the reception of medieval architectural sculpture in art history and archaeology, and the reasons why it remained a disarmingly easy topic. Detailed analysis of the most popular theories used to explain the imagery reveals the lack of consideration paid to the contexts in which the images were produced and used. Chapter 2 takes up one of the threads undone by this critique to explore the perplexing and paradoxical world of the grotesque and its suitability to medieval religious life. Rooted in the idea of religious spaces as liminal and therefore suited to manifestations of similarly ambiguous imagery, the discussion navigates the edges of the marvellous in medieval society. Liminality is presented as crucial to understanding the architectural sculpture of medieval religious buildings, which also informs its often-cited apotropaic function. Further, the necessity of taking what is now termed the "supernatural" seriously, as medieval society did, is stressed. Chapter 3 builds upon this exploration of metaphysical context with an investigation of how religious buildings were built, funded, perceived and used by medieval communities. The emphasis upon the building and its users enables a glimpse of a world structured quite differently from our own, with traditions and opinions that contradict post-Victorian ideas of appropriate religious behaviour.

The following two sections take the images as their organising principle. The three chapters that constitute the second section are based upon the common motif of the head. Chapter 4 introduces the locations and typical appearances of the "severed head" in medieval architectural sculpture before discussing its likely apotropaic qualities. Chapters 5 and 6 investigate 'the most important of all human features for the grotesque' (Bakhtin, 1984: 317), the mouth. The functions of disgorging and devouring carried significant theological weight in medieval religion and were by no means diametrically opposed; the symbolic devouring of the body of Christ at the mass to absorb the divine was mirrored by the devouring of souls in hell. The mouth and the head are presented as ambiguous motifs well suited to the expression of medieval conceptions of the sacred as dangerous and unstable.

The final section focuses upon the full figure. The blending of human and animal attributes to produce obscure creatures is a notable characteristic of medieval architectural art, and they are explored in chapter 7. Chapter 8 then turns to look at a specific genre – the siren – to examine the Christian use of an ancient figure. Close analysis of the imagery suggests that beneath the surface moralising the classical associations of the siren with death and knowledge remain. On the tails of the mermaid, chapter 9 examines what are commonly perceived as explicitly sexual figures in medieval architectural art, entertainers and exhibitionists. Often portrayed dancing or tumbling, I relate the images back to the idea of liminality as fundamental to the sacred.

The information upon which this thesis draws was collected over a three-year period (1999-2002), primarily from sites in Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset and Wiltshire but occasionally also from neighbouring counties (see figs A1. 4 and A1. 5). The sculptures on each building were recorded using photographs, sketches and field notes; this information was augmented by library-based research and finally written up to form a selective database for medieval architectural sculpture in the region between the late eleventh- and mid-sixteenth centuries (Appendix 1).

Section I: Contexts

Medieval Architectural Sculpture in Archaeology and Art History

Introduction

Imagery considered "ornamental", has, in the history of Western art, rarely been accorded much praise. One critic writes that art history has 'conspicuously failed in its responsibilities towards the so-called decorative arts through simple neglect and an ideological bias towards those arts that permit the free movement of the pen and brushstroke, the mark of the individual mind on paper or canvas' (Smith, 1995: 17). "Decorative" or "ornamental" generally suggests art that embellishes a functional object, art that is limited by the nature of the material or space available on that object. This "secondary" nature (as opposed to art whose primary function is purely an aesthetic one) has traditionally accorded it a relatively minor or inconsequential position in the history of art (see also Bedford and Robinson, n.d.). This view has been perpetuated and maintained by circular, reinforcing arguments: decorative art is repetitive and therefore provides no opportunity for individual expression; this precludes originality, often regarded by art historians and literary critics alike as 'the criterion for quality' (Renoir, 1974: 147). Decorative art, then, by its very nature, cannot be original and therefore cannot be of any quality.

This 'ideological bias' has its roots deep in the aesthetic ideal of restraint, which, as E. H. Gombrich suggests, is exemplified by the classical tradition (1979: 18). Classical art and architecture are governed by several interrelated principles, among them, symmetry, moderation, the harmonious relationship of individual parts to the whole

and, especially for architecture, a hierarchy of elements. Within such a context ornament is dangerous

> precisely because it dazzles us and tempts the mind to submit without proper reflection. The attractions of richness and splendour are for the childish; a grown-up person should resist these blandishments and opt for the sober and rational (*ibid.* 17).

Herein for the classicist (and traditional western art history in general) lies the problem: the immediacy of ornament bypasses all intellectual processing. It is visceral rather than cerebral, 'an offence against reason' (*ibid.* 1979: 19). Multiple and inconsistent interpretations are inevitable (Steiner, 1988: 61).

Into such a framework may be placed the study of medieval architectural sculpture. Typically characterised as ornamental it has certainly generated a variety of often conflicting interpretations. In many respects this is laudable, for it allows "fringe" theories equal footing to more weighty academic ones, in the process creating a truly interdisciplinary and wide ranging body of work. On the other hand, the competing visions can be so dense it is difficult to find any path through them, often precluding the possibility of greater understanding. Many of the problems stem from two main areas, both of which are closely related. From the Middle Ages onward the content and style of the imagery have shocked the aesthetic sensibilities of classically educated scholars, in extreme cases prompting acts of iconoclasm. The context of the imagery – in and upon religious buildings – only serves to emphasise any perceived aesthetic incongruity. Content and context thus come together to create profound interpretative problems.

In this chapter I aim to introduce and explore some of the features which have been influential in moulding perceptions about medieval architectural sculpture. The first two sections deal with questions of style and content and the associations that have accrued around both. The latter half of the chapter explores the interpretative schemes which have been used to explain these carvings.

Grotesque and Gothic

The grotesque is the slang of architecture (Wildridge, 1899: 2).

As the introduction has highlighted, in those periods that revere classical ideals as the most sublime and the standard against which everything else might be measured, styles of art which not only feature the distorted, asymmetric and hybrid but appear to be governed by such principles tend to court little favour. To the Renaissance, for example, medieval architecture was "Gothic" in that its wilful disregard of classical principles was analogous to the behaviour of those tribes that plundered Rome in the fourth and fifth centuries, chief among them the Goths (Longueil, 1923: 453; see also de Beer, 1948). Indeed, according to the sixteenth-century art historian, Vasari, it was the architecture of the Gothic tribes themselves (Bond, 1912: 7).

Similar atmospheres haunt the grotesque. Precursors of the term first appeared in the late fifteenth century to refer to a particular feature of first-century Roman wall painting that had been discovered through the excavation of ruinous villas and bath-houses in Italy (Kuryluk, 1987: 12; Yates, 1997: 5). This hitherto unknown style of classical art was not the centrepiece of each wall painting, mural or fresco but rather appeared as a frame or border surrounding empty space, landscape, or a well-known mythical scene. Typically, this style fused together architectural, vegetal, animal and human elements; 'graceful fantasies, symmetrical anatomical impossibilities, small beasts, human heads, and delicate, indeterminate vegetables, [were] all presented as ornament with a faintly mythological character imparted by representations of fauns, nymphs, satyrs, and centaurs' (Harpham, 1982: 26). Although the designs were never intended to be underground, their discovery in the dark tunnels and rooms of buried palaces and bath-houses lent the term that first came into common use to describe them – *grottesche* – an entirely subterranean feel.[1] In some respects the chthonic subtleties of the word were appropriate for these heterogeneous and chaotic frames

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[1] *La grottesca* and *grottesco*, the Italian roots of the word, both refer to *grotta* (cave), which, in Latin, is probably *crupta* or *crypta* (crypt) (from *crypto* meaning "hidden"); the Greek term for vault is closely linked (Kayser, 1963: 19; Harpham, 1982: 27; Miller, 1982: 8; Yates, 1997: 7).

'contradicted the norms of clarity, balance, and harmony, features which were assumed to have governed the ancient mind' (Kuryluk, 1987: 12). Antique art had, after all, a tenebrous presence beneath its drive for order.

As excavations progressed, those Renaissance artists who made the increasingly less difficult and hazardous journey into the buried vaults found inspiration in these designs for their own work. The Italian painter Pinturicchio (1454-1513) was one of the earliest artists to adapt the new style (Schulz, 1962) and the designs left a strong impression on many visitors (Dacos, 1969: 3). As Vasari recounted, both Raphael (1483-1520) and Giovanni da Udine 'were struck with amazement, both the one and the other, at the freshness, beauty and excellence of those works' within the remains of the Palace of Titus (Vasari, 1568: 1673). Experiences such as this were, for the development of Renaissance art, seminal; Raphael assigned the ornamental decoration of the Vatican loggias largely to Giovanni, who, 'given a free hand, created a system of design based on what he had seen in the "grottoes" that filled their space so entirely, and were so independent of any center that they rivalled the main panels themselves' (Harpham, 1982: 29).

Renaissance designs such as these are commonly accepted as the primary sense of the term "grotesque", which only later gathers into itself a broader complex of abstract ideas potentially unrelated to images. This view is closely linked to the changing patterns of the term's use, which

> comes to be applied in a more general fashion during the Age of Reason –
> and of Neo-Classicism – when the characteristics of the grotesque style of art
> – extravagance, fantasy, individual taste, and the rejection of 'the natural
> conditions of organization' – are the object of ridicule and disapproval. The
> more general sense…which it has developed by the early eighteenth century
> is therefore that of 'ridiculous, distorted, unnatural' (adj.); 'an absurdity, a
> distortion of nature' (noun) (Clayborough, 1965: 6).

Overemphasis upon the evolution of the term, however, misses the point that from the outset the fantastic style named grotesque by its Renaissance admirers had evoked broader philosophical debate. Indeed, inseparable from the seemingly innocuous ornamental styles lay vast and, to the prevailing orthodoxies, often subversive concepts. On this topic the comments of the first-century architect and military engineer Marcus Vitruvius Pollio are still rewarding:

> But those subjects which were copied from actual realities are scorned in these days of bad taste. We now have fresco paintings of monstrosities, rather than truthful representations of definite things. For instance, reeds put in the place of columns, fluted appendages with curly leaves and volutes, instead of pediments, candelabra supporting representations of shrines, and on top of their pediments numerous tender stalks and volutes growing up from the roots and having human figures senselessly seated upon them; sometimes stalks having only half-length figures, some with animal heads, others with the heads of animals.

> Such things do not exist and cannot exist and have never existed. Hence it is the new taste that has caused bad judges of poor art to prevail over true artistic excellence. For how is it possible that a reed should really support a roof, or a candelabrum a pediment with its ornaments, or that such a slender thing as a stalk should support a figure perched upon it, or that roots and stalks should produce now flowers and now half-length figures? Yet when people see these frauds, they find no fault with them but on the contrary are delighted, and do not care whether any of them can exist or not. Their understanding is darkened by decadent critical principles so that it is not capable of giving its approval authoritatively and on the principle of propriety to that which really can exist. The fact is that pictures which are unlike reality ought not to be approved... (Vitruvius, 1914: 211-212).

Despite the fact that Vitruvius was writing towards the close of the first century BC, and the ruins that 'impressed the generation of Raphael, and created by emulation a

new artistic idiom' were identified as the *Domus Aurea* (the palatial complex constructed by Nero from AD 64 onwards), the quoted extract remains important (Sechter, 1994: 23). Not only are there close formal similarities between Vitruvius' description and the grotesques of the *Domus Aurea* but the work of Vitruvius was taken as authoritative, encapsulating the aesthetic vision of classical Rome. Further, his treatise, *De Architectura,* had become available in translation during the opening years of the sixteenth century and was widely embraced by neo-classical architects.

Vitruvius winds his assessment of the frescos around two main points: their closeness to reality (mimesis) and the appropriateness of their style (decorum). These images disappoint him on both counts. The Vitruvian view holds that the value of a painting resides in its ability to represent concrete forms, a picture being 'in fact, a representation of a thing which really exists or which can exist: for example, a man, a house, a ship, or anything else from whose definite and actual structure copies resembling it can be taken' (Vitruvius, 1914: 210). In this sense the fresco images cannot be esteemed because they depict "unnatural" and unreal forms. Second, and closely related, these forms are disharmonious and hybrid, contradicting 'the need for decorum' that 'lies at the core of the classical doctrine of art' (Sechter, 1994: 27). This opinion, based upon Vitruvius and promoted by neo-classical architects such as Alberti, affected all art criticism that appeared in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Barasch, 1971: 75).[2]

Gothic Revival

The Gothic Revival facilitated new appreciation of the grotesque style. During the eighteenth century the philosophical and artistic movement known as the Counter-Enlightenment championed the Gothic style against classical order. Whereas Enlightenment philosophers had sought to dispense with "archaic" superstition,

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[2] A notable exception was the writer Henry Wotton, who, in *The Elements of Architecture* (1624) had questionned Vitruvian wisdom on the topic of grotesque ornament (Barasch, 1971: 65-66).

promoting instead the belief that true knowledge and perfect virtue could be attained through reason, 'the mastery of passion, and on calm, confident regulation' (Davenport-Hines, 1998: 2-3), the "Goths" celebrated the irrational, the chaotic and freakish, placing greater value upon experience and feeling than rational argument. The fascination with the transgressive rather than the progressive fuelled the Gothic obsession with the mad and the outcast, death, ruination and the uncontrollable power of natural forces. Revived Gothic has therefore always had a taste for the (melo)dramatic and the cheap theatrical effect. In the early eighteenth century this found visual expression in the carefully "staged" gardens around aristocratic houses, where the erection of ruinous buildings and the careful arrangement of dead trees combined to produce the desired sombre atmosphere (see, for illustration, Germann, 1972; Macaulay, 1975: 20-39). Gothic and exotic styles mixed freely in some gardens as at Kew in London, where, in the second half of the eighteenth century, 'a Turkish mosque, a Chinese pagoda, and a Gothic "cathedral"' were built (Summerson, 1993: 452). As Barasch notes,

> That the prevailing taste in the art, literature, and manners of the neo-classical age in England was "Grotesque and Gothique" is perhaps a surprising statement to those who are accustomed to viewing the eighteenth century as the Augustan Age of the English arts. Yet this is what rationalist critics thought of their own times (1971: 95).

It is during this century that the connections between grotesque art and Gothic architecture were established. Both stood as a popular challenge to the authoritative principles upon which classical art and beauty were based and in this way 'the native English appetite for forms that were "unregulated" and "unnatural" to a handful of critics, survive[d] in popular taste as a kind of underground railroad running from the Renaissance to the nineteenth century' (*ibid.*). If popular taste was for the native and Gothic, learned tastes tended towards the classical.

Revived Gothic, despite the superficial glamour, stirred deeper imaginative currents that had great bearing upon the reception of medieval art and architecture in general.

In the mid-eighteenth century two landmark buildings, Inverary Castle, built under the direction of the Duke of Argyll in 1745, and Strawberry Hill, Twickenham, the ongoing creation (from 1747) of the novelist Horace Walpole, both of which used the Gothic style throughout, effectively questioned Gothic frivolity. Rather, it was authenticity that mattered: in-depth knowledge of medieval architecture was necessary if one was to be able to recreate it in detail. This spurred a more scientific approach to the medieval past, which effectively characterised research well into the nineteenth century.[3] Two crucial figures in the movement toward greater archaeological accuracy were the specialist publisher, John Britton, and the architect, Thomas Rickman. Britton's *Architectural Antiquities of Great Britain* appeared in five volumes from 1807 onwards and appealed to both scholars and the educated public alike, 'a successful combination not only for Britton as a publisher but for interest in the Gothic style in general' (Macaulay, 1975: 174). In 1819 Thomas Rickman published *An Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of Architecture in England*, which, like Britton's enterprise was very well received and ran to several editions (Rickman, 1848). In this work he advanced the classificatory system with which architectural historians are still familiar, dividing the styles of building in England in the medieval period into four chronological groups – Norman, Early English, Decorated, and Perpendicular. Rickman's meticulous approach did not, however, extinguish the romantic vision of the medieval period as an age of faith; indeed, the religious movements of the 1830s had much in common with the romantic, antiquarian spirit (White, 1962: 25-26).

Victorian desire for a "virtuous" Gothic, entirely suited to the oppressive, awesome atmosphere appropriate for religious architecture and indeed, a thoroughly moral society in general (see, for example, Pugin, 1973 [1836]), meant that certain aspects of medieval architecture were played down or omitted from serious study. Initially, only the thirteenth century appeared to court favour. To the Victorians this period represented 'medieval art attained, medieval art at its height, and medieval art in its

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[3] This effectively severed the connection made between medieval architectural sculpture and Egyptian hieroglyphs that was established in the Renaissance period and reiterated in the eighteenth century (Dieckmann, 1957; Vanuxem, 1957: 54).

most complete expression, unmatched before and unequaled thereafter' (Bober, 1978: vi). Austere and light, this period was rarely home to the sort of imagery that characterised the earlier Romanesque period as primitive and the later medieval era as degenerate. As Emile Mâle put it, the art of the thirteenth century was 'pure, amazingly pure' (1961 [1913]: 62).

The desire for "pure" Gothic art called forth highly romantic interpretations of the medieval period. Notwithstanding its connections with anything considered remotely barbaric the term Gothic had been associated with the supernatural and mysterious since at least the eighteenth century (Longueil, 1923: 454). As a later section explores in more detail, the increasingly scientific vision of the world that Enlightenment philosophy and mass industrialisation engendered meant that inexplicable phenomena were often ignored, ridiculed, or relegated to the "non-serious" worlds of childhood or dreams. Such a context not only allowed for but virtually demanded the perception of medieval craftsmen as child-like and superstitious. It also meant that ignorance of the medieval period could be turned to one's imaginative advantage, as exemplified in the following by W. R. Lethaby:

> Gothic architecture...is a sort of fairy story in stone; the folk had fallen in love with building... [s]ome of their tombs and shrines must have been conceived as little fairy buildings; they would have liked little angels to hop about them all alive and blow fairy trumpets. In the building of the great cathedrals it must be allowed that there is an element that we do not understand. The old builders worked wonder into them; they had the ability which children have to call up enchantment (1912 [1904]: 141).

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the terms Grotesque and Gothic tended to become interchangeable, and the former, despite its classical origins, increasingly came to signify the monstrous aspects of medieval art.

John Ruskin on Noble and Ignoble Grotesque

One of the most influential writers on medieval art in this period was the critic John Ruskin. Where Vitruvius condemned the designs that would inspire Renaissance grotesque Ruskin denounced Renaissance grotesque directly. This sat well with his theory of two types of grotesque, "noble" and "ignoble". The former was serious, fearful and gruesome, the latter frivolous and obscene. Noble grotesque he associated with the semi-independent medieval craftsman-designer and Gothic architecture, while the ignoble grotesque he identified as a product of the Renaissance and denounced vehemently, as the following from *The Stones of Venice* makes clear:

> The architecture raised at Venice during this period is among the worst and basest ever built by the hands of men, being especially distinguished by a spirit of brutal mockery and insolent jest, which, exhausting itself in a deformed and monstrous sculpture, can sometimes be hardly otherwise defined than as the perpetuation in stone of the ribaldries of drunkenness (Ruskin, 1904a, V: 135).

Later on, he addresses the style as

> an elaborate and luscious form of nonsense...composed of nymphs, cupids, and satyrs, with shreddings of heads and paws of meek, wild beasts, and nondescript vegetables. ... Grossness, of one kind or another, is, indeed, an unfailing characteristic of the style; either latent, as in the refined sensuality of the more graceful arabesques, or, in the worst examples, manifested in every species of obscene conception and abominable detail (*ibid.* 162).

Here the classical idea of value in art being dependent upon such principles as its depiction of "real" things in an approved and decorous manner is reiterated. For Ruskin, the grotesques painted in the Vatican represented 'the fruit of great minds degraded to base objects' (*ibid.* 170).

While Ruskin wrote vehemently against Renaissance grotesque, he extolled the virtues of medieval grotesque. Like the contemporary artistic movements that celebrated the medieval, Ruskin saw in medieval architectural sculpture an honesty missing in the manufactured forms of the Renaissance. Yet within 'the very forms of debasement he so excitedly condemns' in Renaissance art Ruskin finds 'the same qualities he admires in Gothic architecture: "there is jest – perpetual, careless, and not infrequently obscene – in the most noble work of the Gothic periods"' (Diedrick, 1988: 11). Rather, Ruskin's zealous attempt to separate decent from indecent and true from false grotesque may be related to a more widespread trend among the Victorian middle classes – the creation of a bourgeois identity through exclusion of that which was considered low and vulgar.

The consequences of such analysis for grotesque imagery were twofold. On the one hand it opened up grotesque art for wider critical attention; on the other, scholars tended to censor or trivialize the more obscene elements (e.g Wright, 1865). Certainly, the effect of separating out and naming different forms of grotesque and identifying each with specific historical epochs had a lasting influence. While medieval grotesque became praiseworthy, the "ignoble" grotesque, identified as it was with the formal academicism of the classical style and the mass production of decorative motifs, did little to repudiate the connotations of emptiness and absurdity. Indeed, F. W. Fairholt, writing on 'Grotesque Design' for the *Art Journal* of 1862 apologises to his readers for calling their attention to something so trivial and meaningless (Fairholt, 1862: 92). Not until interest in the grotesque revived after the Second World War would the term begin to be recognised again as a critical concept interweaving and combining oppositions in equal measure (see, for example, Kayser, 1963; Jennings, 1963; Clayborough, 1965; Thomson, 1972; Mermier, 1977; Harpham, 1982; Kuryluk, 1987: Russo, 1995; Miles, 1997; Hyman, 2000). Post-war writers welcomed the grotesque, for in its distorted and schizoid face they found a curiously familiar reflection. Until then the associations remained overwhelmingly perjorative and 'unnatural, frivolous, and irrational connections between things' in art and

architecture tended to be relegated to the decorative (Russo, 1995: 3; Jones, 1982 [1856]).

Monsters and Scholars

The formalisation of archaeology and architectural history as academic disciplines in the latter half of the nineteenth century ran concurrently with the emergence of scientific "objectivity". This required of the true scientist a kind of heroic self-discipline and attention to detail which found expression in a 'near-fanatical effort to create atlases – the bibles of the observational sciences' documenting observable phenomena such as birds, fossils or human bodies in incredible detail (Daston and Galison, 1992: 81). However, there was more than just accuracy at stake; morality was closely bound up with the scientific endeavour. Self-command was necessary to triumph over 'the temptations and frailties of flesh and spirit' for neither fatigue nor carelessness could excuse a lapse in attention that affected measurements or results (*ibid.* 83). Further, the scientist had to be wary of the dark realms of superstition; he was a supra-rational being, a dispeller of myths and shadows. Indeed, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White have argued that nineteenth-century science only emerged as a distinctive and autonomous set of values after a prolonged struggle against ritual and superstition, for scientific identity depended upon the distance it could establish between itself and the popular beliefs and customs it regarded as foolish (Stallybrass and White, 1986: 174). Archaeologists were likewise keen to distance themselves and their discipline from the study of folklore, and a process of gradual separation intensified throughout much of the following century (Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf, 1999: 8-9).

The attempt to separate out scientific "fact" from scientific "fiction" depended upon rigorous classification. However, the greater the impetus toward definition the greater the advancing dark: as science worked steadily towards establishing 'the homogeneity of phenomena' it simultaneously excluded from the field of

consideration those unclassifiable, heterogeneous elements (Bataille, 1979: 68; Lykke, 1996: 16). Unknowable by scientific means, beyond all frameworks of legitimate knowledge, these subjects became off-limit to orthodox enquiry, skirting the boundaries where the 'rigid certainty of the academy blurs to a wild, suggestive unknown' (Cohen, 1994: 1).

The increasing exclusion of the indefinable from the arena of proper investigation not only marginalized the monstrous and fantastic, but through association, called their habitual dwellings into disrepute. Populated with talking animals and shapeshifting creatures, fairytales and fables were gradually relegated to children's literature throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Warner, 1994: 12-26). Beings that exceed or confuse scientific definitions have been closely associated with immaturity and imagination ever since. To this day any bibliographic search under the heading "monsters" is likely to produce hundreds of story books for children yet only a handful of works intended for a "serious" adult readership. Animals, too, have suffered a similar fate. Scientific support for rational enquiry coupled with an anthropocentric outlook has meant that any consideration of or responsibility towards the non-human can 'only be thought of as excessive or incalculable' (Baker, 2000: 77). From this point of view to 'identify with animals' is often disparaged as 'a childish thing' (*ibid.* 1993: 123). This is an important bias to acknowledge: if our prejudice 'constructs the animal as absolutely other, and by association those who identify with the animal...as other' then the empathetic reader of the non-human other is one who is 'insufficiently sophisticated, insufficiently adult' (*ibid.* 124). In the eyes of its practitioners nineteenth- and twentieth-century science was neither – indeed, these were the very accusations it sought to flee through classifying and cataloguing the natural world to impeccable standards.

Given such a cultural context, some of the assumptions made about medieval architectural sculpture over the last century or so are perhaps unsurprising. Art historians have often classed these images as the product of an immature mind. Mâle, for example, believed that the medieval artists responsible for these images were themselves simple craftsmen, naïve and illiterate, who 'delighted in nature for its own

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sake' (1961 [1913]: 48). There was no depth to their sculpture: '[l]eft to himself the mediaeval sculptor did not trouble about symbols, but was simply one of the people, looking at the world with the wandering eyes of a child' (*ibid.* 51). Anderson reiterated this theme. The images that could not be explained by reference to manuscript illustrations, the 'apparently meaningless grotesques', were the result of an 'exuberance of creative fancy among the carvers' (Anderson, 1938: 22). In a later book she stated that '[a]s a child hardly knows the difference between the creations of its own imagination and the features of its real environment, so unicorns, basilisks, griffins, and other mythical monsters were much more real to the carvers than the actual fauna of distant lands' (1954: 16). This imaginative playfulness was closely associated with medieval popular culture in general –

> The fact is that conceptions of this kind are of essentially popular origin. The gargoyles like churchyard vampires, or the dragons subdued by ancient bishops, came from the depths of the people's consciousness, and had grown out of their fireside tales (Mâle, 1961 [1913]: 59).

Although Mâle made the astute point that these are not so much images copied from the manuscripts of the clerics but created by ordinary people, it was this very fact that demeaned them; from their inception they were quite literally vulgar.

While the presence of the unclassifiable troubled the scientific mind, the presence of bestial imagery troubled the religious: animality signified passion and the possession of (or by) an "animal nature". But at least the generation of animals was *normal.* In contrast, the conception and birth of monsters represented the terrible consequences of sexual transgression, the production of an abnormal body. The emphasis upon the primal force of sexuality that medieval images often display was enough to warrant negative reactions from many art historians and was closely linked with the crude artistic ability – and therefore outlook – of the "uneducated" stonemason. Local iconoclasts often took matters into their own hands. Phillip Johnston noted in 1918 that a number of carved corbels on the church of St Nicholas at Studland (Dorset) had been broken off or defaced (1918: 54-55) and there are similar rumours

concerning a number of missing sculptures from St Mary and St David's in Kilpeck, Herefordshire (Weir and Jerman, 1986: 9). In the mid-nineteenth century a correspondent to the journal *Notes and Queries* wrote that 'I know a sacred building still used for public worship, in which the misereries (though very beautiful as carvings) are so filthy and obscene in their references, that they are nailed down by the authorities that they may not be seen' ('R. S.', 1859: 239).

If the nineteenth century found much to be offended by in architectural imagery it is perhaps unsurprising to discover similar attitudes informing their study. Some of the more outrageous sculptures were misdrawn or hastily described (Andersen, 1977: 10-11) while others were omitted altogether (Johnston, for example, did not dwell on some of the more monstrous figures to be found at Studland). The sexual elements of many medieval carvings, however, could be played down by emphasis upon the child-like outlook and mentality of the sculptors. Mâle's medieval sculptors, for example, were completely innocent and entirely driven by artistic ideals of form:

> When left to their own devices the craftsmen of the thirteenth century were like artists of every age, to whom some new combination of line always seems supremely worthy of effort…. Neither satire nor indecency had any part in the artist's jesting, and the hideous obscenities which have been discovered in the cathedrals exist only in the imagination of a few prejudiced archaeologists (1961 [1913]: 60, 62).

Unclassifiable (and therefore unknowable by the usual means), amoral, distorted and demonic, medieval architectural sculpture sat within a swamp of objectionable epithets. Not only did this help to formulate its lesser worth in comparison to more formal Christian sculpture, but gradually formed an enduring view of medieval architectural work as little more than the idle fantasies of unsupervised, illiterate and childish craftsmen.

Interpreting Medieval Architectural Sculpture

The various theories advanced to explain medieval architectural sculpture might be summarized as follows:

1. Didactic. Perhaps the most influential of all interpretations, this view suggests that architectural sculpture possessed a specific Christian message that the laity, presumed illiterate, could therefore "read" and absorb. Despite its longevity in art history the view of architectural sculpture as didactic presents numerous problems, treated in depth below.

2. Apotropaic. The apotropaic understanding of medieval architectural sculpture suggests that these images were intended to ward off any evil or malign influence that might target a spiritual house. Such an explanation accounts for their often visually inaccessible location (these are not meant primarily for human eyes) as well as the frequently explicit or curious content (exhibitionists, monsters, etc).

3. Talismanic. Closely connected to the above, yet operating via subtly different means, the images serve to "animate" the building, to endow it with a living presence, thereby strengthening and protecting it.

4. Satiric. This view suggests that medieval carvers and stonemasons operated outside ecclesiastical supervision and were thereby presented with the opportunity to satirize through grotesque representation recognizable members of the community, for example, clerics.

5. Memorial. Studies of art and memory in the ancient and medieval worlds have shown that striking images, if associated with a specific idea, can serve as highly effective means of prompting the recollection of that idea

(Yates, 1966; Carruthers, 1990; Camille, 1993b: 14). In these systems, architectural metaphors are commonplace. Moreover, there is the possibility that the articulation of architectural imagery can manipulate collective memory; thus the incorporation of pagan images into Christian buildings, for example, may have served to erase older networks of meaning, in the process replacing them.

6. Purgative (I). No serious pursuit of the sacred was absent from nightmarish encounters with malevolent demons. Through meditation upon the images of such creatures it is argued that fearful neophytes could gradually come to terms with their fears and eventually master them. This is particularly relevant for cloistered communities and their buildings (Dale, 2001: 424-430).

7. Purgative (II). The carvings represent the demons expelled from the space of the church by the inaugural rites of hallowing and exorcism (Bartlett, 2000: 442-3). While such an explanation accounts for carvings located on the exterior of a building such as gargoyles, it fails to explain any presence of "demonic" imagery on the interior.

8. Oneiric. As discussed above, the daydreams, hallucinations, and idle doodlings of the masons and carvers provided the imagery, itself amplified and/or stimulated by popular stories and legends.

9. Survival. The images represent pagan gods, goddesses and other figures from pre-Christian mythology, incorporated into the medieval church to smooth the transition from pagan to Christian worship (Sheridan and Ross, 1975).

10. Anagogical. That images can alter consciousness was recognised by Abbot Suger of St Denis in his rebuilding of the city's cathedral, incorporating ideas taken from Pseudo-Dionysius's metaphysics. Abbot

Suger wrote that he found himself translated to another world upon contemplation of the splendours of the building (Frisch, 1987: 9).

To this list I would add a further possibility based upon my own research:

11. Identification of liminal space. Grotesque forms, in drawing attention to the boundaries of conventional physical form or behaviour by transgressing it, embody ambiguity. Through association, these unclassifiable images demarcate the architectural space of a religious building as similarly beyond human systems of knowledge. In this sense they may be taken as markers of liminal space, in between the world of humans and God yet simultaneously both (see chapter 2).

Two of these interpretations have tended to dominate all others and accordingly, warrant exploration. These are: that the carvings served a didactic purpose (no. 1 in the list above); and that they represent pagan deities or mythological figures (no. 9). I shall begin with the didactic argument.

The "Picture Book of the Churches"

The most enduring interpretative model used to explain the significance of medieval ecclesiastical art must be the "Picture Book of the Churches". This is the idea that images in all media (painting, sculpture, mosaic etc) were born out of desire on the part of the clergy to instruct the laity in matters of Christian doctrine, morality and appropriate behaviour. Thus the church becomes a readable "picture book" in which illiterate laymen and women may learn the basic tenets of the faith.

Entirely suited to nineteenth-century antiquarianism, the systematic Picture Book synthesis of image with Christian reference satisfied both scholar and churchman. Here at last was archaeological proof of the desired medieval age of faith, that

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'beautiful and brilliant time when Europe was a single Christian land' (Novalis, cited in Van Engen, 1986: 520). Indeed, in a period when academic enquiry, religion and romanticism were difficult to separate it is perhaps unsurprising that the impetus for the theory came from no scholarly dissertation but from a romantic novel. In *Notre-Dame de Paris: 1482* (1831) Victor Hugo 'discovered and formulated the first theorem of nineteenth-century medieval iconography' (Bober, 1978: xii). His message was simple: 'In the Middle Ages men had no great thought that they did not write down in stone' (Hugo, cited in Bober, 1978: xii). Medieval art was a universal system and the Gothic cathedrals and churches of northern France to which Hugo referred nothing more than vast sculpted encyclopaedias.

Although Hugo had provided the outline, a theoretical frame for interpreting medieval architectural art, it was his devoted friend and admirer, Adolf Didron, who set out to demonstrate its truth. He believed that the church intended its figural and illustrative art for the instruction of the unlettered people who could thus "read" the monuments rather than books: 'The object of art being to instruct, the plan of instruction was intended to be encyclopedic, and effectively became so' (Didron, 1886: 10). The influence of Hugo and Didron in the nineteenth century historical world – both were active members of the Committee on Arts and Monuments in France – meant that the latter's tendency, as an enthusiastic Christian, to exaggerate the role of the church in the art he studied was easily overlooked.

The Picture Book theory was consolidated by the enormously influential work of the art historian Émile Mâle. In 1898 he published his monumental work on the art of the thirteenth century which, in 1913, appeared in an English translation. In the preface he provides a neat summary of the idea:

> To the Middle Ages art was didactic. All that it was necessary that men
> should know – the history of the world from the creation, the dogmas of
> religion, the examples of the saints, the hierarchy of the virtues, the range of
> the sciences, arts and crafts – all these were taught them by the windows of
> the church or by the statues in the porch. The pathetic name of *Biblia*

pauperum given by the printers of the fifteenth century to one of their earliest books, might well be given to the church. There the simple, the ignorant, all who were named "sancta plebs Dei," learned through their eyes almost all they knew of their faith. …Through the medium of art the highest conceptions of theologian and scholar penetrated to some extent the minds of even the humblest of the people (Mâle, 1961 [1913]: vii).

Numerous assumptions and problems, however, plague the Picture Book idea. These might be listed, in no particular order, as follows:

1. Images are ranked as inferior to texts.
2. Differences between texts and visual imagery are ignored.
3. The processes of reading and writing are taken for granted, i.e. the medieval and modern reader are indistinguishable from each other.
4. In assuming an ecclesiastical imperative for the art, not only is there a general failure to consider the circumstances of production but a rigid division between official/clerical/literate and common/lay/illiterate is established.
5. In assuming universal understandings there is also a failure to take into account the diversity of medieval audiences and their understandings of images with many meanings.
6. There is no evaluation of the architectural or social contexts of the imagery.

Before investigating these points it is instructive to look at application of the Picture Book model to architectural sculpture for it is here, at the margins of medieval art, where the theory begins to break down.

Architectural Sculpture as Didactic: Problems and Inconsistencies

While much medieval public art may be counted as didactic, for example, the processions of biblical figures on portals and friezes, cycles of virtues and vices, and wall-paintings of the Last Judgement, for the less easily visible images characteristic

of architectural sculpture there are significant problems (Kenaan-Kedar, 1995: 4). As the following discussion illustrates, art historians working with the Picture Book theory tended to attribute those images that escaped certain explanation to the imagination of the carvers themselves. These "disruptive" images were perceived to have no discernible religious meaning because they were the product of unsupervised, illiterate and child-like craftsmen. They were purely ornamental.

For imagery to work as didactic a number of conditions need to be met. First, it must be easy to recognise. This tends towards a uniformity of representation. Although medieval architectural sculpture is frequently repetitive in its choice of subjects there is often little conformity in their treatment. Yet it was the method of copying these images, rather than any failure of the Picture Book theory itself, that was perceived to produce such discrepancies:

> That the carvers did not fully understand the symbolism of the subjects they represented is made clear by the endless variations on every theme that can be found in their work. Each legend affected the creative genius of the age like a pebble dropped in a pond, the sharply defined inner circle corresponding to the correct carving, directly based upon a manuscript illumination, the last ripples, distorted by reeds and stones, to the senseless "baberies" which dimly reflect the original design…The countless inaccurate versions of beasts and legends to be found in parish churches throughout the country probably reflect the attempts of illiterate carvers to reproduce the designs seen in the mason's lodge attached to some great cathedral, where they had been temporarily employed (Anderson, 1938: 11).

Locating meaning for pieces of art in manuscripts is a familiar art-historical technique. For Anderson, each image might be traced to a "correct" manuscript illustration, the clarity of the carvers' reproductions deteriorating through time and distance from the original like the intelligibility of a phrase in a game of Chinese Whispers. Art historians in related fields of study, however, had other ideas. If Anderson's "inaccurate" images were conceived as wholly negative, the result of

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poor copying, for E. W. Tristram such imagery glowed with 'the spirit of self-reliance and independence characteristic of Gothic art' (1950: 415). In his comprehensive study of medieval wall painting he made it clear that the 'work of the period, whether in large churches or in small, witnesses to the fine touch of the craftsman unhampered by the inevitable restraints imposed by the process of copying' (1950: 415; see Nordenfalk, 1967: 421 for consideration of the 'almost incredible power of variation with which all these painters were endowed').

Derivative or inspired, the assumed illiteracy of the carvers provided a framework in which those images that resisted the conventional means of interpretation (by referral to manuscripts) might be explained. These 'lesser carvings' where 'theological supervision was less strict' were generally assumed to be the result of the 'individual fancies of the mason-carvers' (Gardner, 1935: 8). On similar grounds some writers proposed that all these images were meaningless. If learned clerics such as Bernard of Clairvaux were unable to comprehend these images, suggested Mâle, then what hope is there of finding in them any meaning at all? "Ingenious archaeologists" were to blame for the idea that architectural sculpture carried any significance:

> According to them [archaeologists] the tiniest flower or smallest grinning
> monster has a meaning which the medieval theologians can reveal to us.
> …What likelihood is there that they [the sculptors] would have attempted to
> express so many and such subtle meanings through figures which are
> invisible from below except with good glasses? (Mâle, 1961 [1913]: 46, 47)

Where Anderson tried to locate meaning by suggesting that these carvings derived from the (increasingly dim) memory of a manuscript image, Mâle argued for their lack of meaning due to their general incomprehensibility and architectural position.

However, Anderson had already highlighted the fact that transmission of authorial intent is never guaranteed. In *The Medieval Carver* (1935) she illustrated this with the story of St Nicholas, a figure whose original legend was radically altered as a result of folk interpretations of his iconography (1935: 48-49; some years later [1971: 94] she

noted a further example). So, despite the perceived advantages of medieval iconography – that 'its basic symbols were generally recognisable, however poorly they might be executed' – the system was potentially open to creative interpretations (1971: 91). In other words the very flexibility that made medieval iconography work for Anderson also served to disable it by allowing an infinite variety of readings: many 'subjects still defy interpretation,' she wrote, 'while others suggest a strange variety of possible explanations' (*ibid.* 93).

While the majority of art historians struggled to marry the Picture Book theory with the wide range of images to be found in medieval architectural sculpture, others believed its presence created more problems than it solved. Meyer Schapiro was consistent in questioning the 'common view that mediaeval art was strictly religious and symbolical' and 'directly imbued with spiritual conceptions in accord with the traditional teachings of the church' (1977 [1947]: 1-3). Schapiro recognised that unlike his own contemporary world the medieval church was not outside the material life of the community it served but an essential part of it. In 1939 he noted that 'It is, in fact, characteristic of Romanesque art that it introduces into the decoration and imagery of the church fresh elements of popular fantasy, everyday observation and naïve piety, beside and even within the doctrinal themes elaborated by centuries of theological meditation' (1977 [1939]: 40). Schapiro's recognition of a "hybrid" medieval religious art meant that he saw the religious (and therefore meaningful) versus the profane (and therefore meaningless) arguments that characterised mid-twentieth century discussion about architectural sculpture as nonsensical. 'Are the religious and ornamental the only alternatives of artistic purpose?' (1977 [1947]: 10) he asked, a point he would elaborate upon some years later:

> In interpreting works of mediaeval religious art, the question arises whether all figures represented in them are properly understood as religious in content…. For a student who is convinced that all in mediaeval art is symbolic or illustrates a religious theme, it is not hard to find a text that seems to justify a moral or spiritualistic interpretation…But there is also the famous letter of St Bernard denouncing the fantastic sculptured capitals of

the Cluniac cloisters as completely devoid of religious significance (1963: 351).

G. G. Coulton also concluded that it is 'not only paradoxical, but anachronistic, to suppose that pictorial art was ever more valuable for religious teaching than the written or spoken word...A large part of medieval symbolism was at no time generally understood, and was rapidly forgotten even by the clergy' (1953: 249, 319).

Images and Texts

The notion of visual art as a universal medium of communication is a commonplace in our perception of medieval art and requires some rethinking (Camille, 1985b: 33). From images we expect an "answer" or a meaning, and if this expectation is thwarted or not instantly forthcoming they are branded inconsequential or at worst, simply decorative. In medieval studies images are commonly used to illustrate some point of historical fact, providing 'the iconographic "proof" of textual truth' (Camille, 1996b: 144). However, this purely illustrative view, in which images assume a passive role as 'distant "mirrors" of medieval reality', of lesser value than and in opposition to writing, misses the 'dangerously disruptive but fertile power of the visual' (*ibid.*).

The pervasive use of Bestiaries as explanatory guides to architectural sculpture illustrates this point well. Bestiaries are compilations of all manner of writing about animals in which little distinction is made between exotic, domestic or imaginary creatures. Typically, the habits and habitat of each creature are detailed and an allegorical interpretation given. A recent study has suggested that this is likely to be due to the nature of its main source, a second-century AD treatise known as the *Physiologus*, or 'Natural Historian', a religious text that used allegorical animals as a means of explaining abstract points of Christian doctrine (Baxter, 1998). By the twelfth century, however, this symbolically loaded narrative had been disrupted by the addition of material from a number of varied sources. A series of publications of illustrated Bestiary manuscripts in the mid-nineteenth century set the scene for art

historians for the next century and a half: striking illustrations eclipsed the primacy of the text and Bestiaries came to be seen increasingly as picture-books, 'medieval encyclopedia[s] of zoology, with moralizations' (*ibid.* 23).

Certainly, most archaeologists of this era were quick to look to Bestiaries for answers to their iconographical problems. Within an archaeological lecture series on medieval sculpture John Romilly Allen concluded:

> We have now succeeded in showing that the system of mystic zoology
> contained in the mediaeval Bestiaries was not only recognised by the Church
> as a means of conveying religious instruction…but also that animal
> symbolism, corresponding exactly with that of the MSS, was used for the
> decoration of ecclesiastical buildings of the twelfth century (Allen, 1887: 357).

His argument, however, like that of subsequent writers such as G. C. Druce and A. H. Collins, relied heavily upon the evidence of one Romanesque doorway, that of the south door from the church at Alne in Yorkshire (see also Allen, 1886). This is itself a unique example of Romanesque sculpture that is directly based upon a Bestiary for eight of the voussoirs are identified by inscriptions. This singular instance did not, however, stop the flood of publications in which the view of Bestiaries as a guidebook to and source of medieval ecclesiastical animal sculpture became art-historical dogma (see, for example, Druce, 1909, 1910, 1915, 1919, 1920, 1931, 1938; Prior and Gardner, 1912: esp. 27-32; Klingender, 1928; Anderson, 1935, 1938, 1954, 1969, 1971; Gardner, 1935, 1951, 1955, 1958; Collins, 1940; Cronin, 1941; Boase, 1953).

Isolated voices suggested Bestiaries might be of less value to the architectural historian than perhaps realised. Mâle was one of the few who were concerned to counteract the tendency of British writers to overstate the influence of Bestiaries on medieval sculpture. He was only able to cite two cases of direct borrowing from a Bestiary source among the imagery in French cathedrals and churches (1961 [1913]: 45). Further, he suggested that when faced with the

rich fauna and flora of Reims, Amiens, Rouen, Paris and in the mysterious world of gargoyles…in what book is enlightenment to be found? We must frankly confess that no help is to be found in books for literature and art are no longer concurrent. No certain conclusions can be reached by comparing them one with the other (*ibid.* 46).

And again; 'the abnormal fauna of the cathedrals finds its explanation in no symbolic scheme, and here the Bestiaries do not help us' (*ibid.* 59).

Although Allen for one did not suggest that Bestiaries contained all the answers to the enigmatic world of medieval sculpture (1887: 357), its identification as a work of zoology, a 'serious work of natural history' (White, 1954: 231) lent it considerable authority. The encyclopaedic, scientific drive of the time, however, meant that the presence of those creatures unrecognised by modern biological criteria served to demean the entire work, leading to the view of Bestiaries as being 'pre-scientific' and riddled with mistakes 'from want of zoological knowledge' (Allen, 1887: 337). This idea of Bestiaries as 'charming and insignificant' collections of animal stories (Hassig, 1999a: xvi) helped to render superficial the sculpted images assumed to be copied from them. Major works on ecclesiastical architecture from this period tend to ignore the architectural sculptures entirely (e.g. Bond, 1913) while comprehensive studies of medieval figurative sculpture are less than complimentary. Prior and Gardner, for example, state that the 'function of these lesser architectural carvings was to be slight and summary, and like their subjects their style should not be taken too seriously' (1912: 241).

Bestiaries are, however, an important source for medieval ecclesiastical sculpture, and provided a path along which classical and oriental pagan material entered and fused with Christian interpretations. Today it is acknowledged that Bestiary images were an integral part of medieval life and widely circulated through speech – preaching, sermons, stories – as well as visual media (Baxter, 1998: 202; Hassig, 1999a: xi; see also Muratova, 1986; Hassig, 1995, 1997). Hence the images were part of cultural life

in general and accordingly need not have been copied directly from manuscripts. Neither are Bestiaries perceived any more as bad zoological treatises with a mystical twist, but as primarily spiritual works in their own right that used allegorized animals and beasts as commentary upon complex Christian themes. The universal 'system of mystic zoology' is questioned; indeed, since Bestiaries themselves generally offer conflicting interpretations of the same animal, it is difficult to say for certain what message might have been intended by any particular carving. Again, the focus shifts to the question of context for these figures may have been susceptible to multiple interpretations, thus rendering impotent any specific didactic imperative.

Without denying the influence of manuscript images, the assumption that pattern books or manuscripts can be referred to for answers does not take account of the social dynamics of book production and dissemination. As Camille has noted, only in 'a culture suffused with texts can things "refer"' (1993a: 46). Texts were not ubiquitous in medieval culture. This process of squeezing the potential 'multiplicity of significant associations' of architectural carvings into the 'classificatory principles of nineteenth-century science' (Klingender, 1971: 328) produces only a glimpse of their potential meanings.

Reading and Writing in the Middle Ages

The idea that pictures were the "letters of the laity" was of course current in medieval culture itself. Early medieval theologians and writers such as Gregory the Great (c.540-604), Bede (c.673-735), and Honorius of Autun (d.638), all maintained this opinion which, by the twelfth century had not only become an orthodox argument but was embodied in canon law (Camille, 1985a: 32; Meyvaert, 1979: 69; Eco, 1986: 16). Many of the standard images of the period, however, would have been too difficult to understand without textual knowledge. The audience before most twelfth-century images would have been unable to read the inscriptions, crucial in interpreting the meaning of the picture. The meaning of the Tree of Jesse, for

example, emerges only in reference to the text of Isaiah 11: 1, or from a performance of this text in sermon or speech by someone literate. Moreover, its proper reading presupposes a scriptural order and mentality, not fully developed in those unused to the left-right up-down sequence of the literate (Camille, 1985a: 34). Before the advent of 'vernacular literacy on a wider level at the end of the century most viewers of art, unaided by the explanations of the *oratores*, the clerical literate group, were only really capable of 'reading between the lines' as it were, in the margins and at the edges' of the image complexes which were supposed to be their "book" ' (*ibid.* 37).

Certainly, analogies such as the Picture Book of the Churches 'tend to take the actual processes of reading and writing (as the medievals understood them) for granted' (*ibid.* 26). For monks, the main producers of books in the medieval period, reading was less a matter of seeing than of hearing and speaking (*ibid.* 28). Moreover, reading was a communal activity, and images, 'whether in books or on walls, were, like medieval texts, dynamically delivered and performed aloud rather than absorbed in static isolation' (*ibid.* 1993a: 44). Meditation would have been a noisy affair (*ibid.* 1985a: 29). The primacy of the spoken word in the Creation mythos – God literally speaks the world into existence – suggests that there was no hierarchy of word over image; rather, both text and image were 'secondary representations, external to, but always referring back to, the spontaneous springs of speech' (*ibid.* 32).

As well as assuming that medieval audiences were literate enough to "read" the pictures, the Picture Book model assumes readable sequences of images. Some misericord series do take a theme (although their location would mitigate against a sequential reading) and bench ends might also bear carvings of scenes that can be read sequentially (see, for example, Jones and Tracy, 1991: 113), yet most architectural carvings do not support such interpretations. Cloister capitals in particular were not intended to be viewed in a continuous sequence for the cloister garth – the stone plinth upon which the open arcades rest – 'makes it virtually impossible to follow a sequence of scenes even around a single capital' (Dale, 2001: 406).

Ecclesiastical or Popular Art?

Despite the hierarchical organization of the church, medieval use of ecclesiastical buildings mirrored a more fluid outlook. As chapter 3 explores in greater detail, churches were not used exclusively for worship but provided space for a diverse range of communal activities including legal meetings, parish feasts, and even games and wrestling contests. Churches were not set apart from the community at large and it is unlikely that their art, given such a social context, would be any different. Moreover, clerics in minor orders often came from similar backgrounds to their parishioners and shared similar concerns and attitudes. Influences were mutual and circular rather than one-sided (Ginzberg, 1980: xiv-xxiv) and it is only to be expected that ecclesiastical art, to some extent, was involved.

In addition, medieval Christianity must be understood as different from its modern successor. As it will become increasingly clear, the medieval world pulsated with monstrous figures: shapeshifting was a concern of peasant and cleric alike (Bartlett, 2000: 685; Dunton-Downer, 1997); faery folk abducted knights (see chapter 5); seductive women changed into serpentine creatures (see chapter 8).[4] On the one hand,

> theologians had for centuries elaborated a cosmic, transcendent, and
> moralistic view of the supernatural, a view dominated by powers and
> principalities conceived as fundamentally Other to the human realm. More
> characteristic of local communities, on the other hand, was an intimate,
> immanent and amoral view of the supernatural, one in which the building
> blocks of the supernatural were apt to be conceived as elements of the
> natural world conjoined in an unexpected or marvellous manner (Caciola,
> 2000: 67).

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[4] For excellent introductions to perceptions of supernatural and natural in the medieval period see Geary, 1994; Jolly, 1996; and Bynum, 1997.

Within such a composite outlook the grotesque carvings among architectural sculpture are by no means out of place. Patronage will be considered in more detail in chapter 3, but here it is worth noting that while in most cases patrons are anonymous, the few records that do exist from the later medieval period indicate that the carvings were often funded by the entire community. These images were clearly not contrary to contemporary religious sensibilities.

Context

As Mâle had clearly expressed, the idea of architectural sculpture as meaningless was closely associated with its typically obscure location. How could these images carry any didactic intent if nobody could see them? For the didactic argument to work, some consideration of both the ease of viewing a specific image as well as the audience likely to view that image is essential. Although writers on medieval architecture were quick to seize upon the romantic qualities of the interior of ecclesiastical buildings – 'shadowy, the high vaults shrouded in gloom, illuminated by the stray gleams of sunlight filtering through high and narrow windows' (Crossley, 1941: 1) – they failed to make explicit the connection that such a dark interior would make many carvings impossible to see. It must be remembered that the images positioned high up, such as roof bosses and corbels, are often difficult enough to make out today even with modern lighting and binoculars.

Further, these images are frequently located in areas of the building that were restricted to the clergy. How could these have served to educate the illiterate laity? T. T. Wildridge was an early dissenting voice on this topic, entitling a short chapter in his book *The Grotesque in Church Art* 'Gothic Ornaments not Didactic' (1899: 25-27). Here he states that 'Reflection will not lead us to believe carvings to have been placed in churches with direct intent to preach or teach' (*ibid.* 25). He dismisses the opinion that the churches were 'practically the picture (or sculpture) galleries and illustrated papers for the illiterate of the past' for it would mean that 'in the days when humble men rarely travelled from home…the inhabitant of a village or town

had for the improvement of his mind…a small collection of composite animals, monsters, mermaids, and impossible flowers' (*ibid.*). Further, he is one of the few writers of the nineteenth century to consider the context of architectural sculpture:

> misericordes have been specially selected for this erroneous consideration of ornament to be the story-book of the Middle Ages. This is unfortunate for the theory, for they were placed only in churches having connection with a monastic or collegiate establishment; they are in the chancels, where the feet of laymen rarely trod, and, moreover, there would be few hours out of the twenty-four when the stalls would not be occupied by the performers of the daily offices or celebrations (*ibid.* 26).

Nearly fifty years later, Schapiro also presented context as the key to understanding marginal images. Like Wildridge he was concerned to counter the widespread idea that medieval art was 'through and through religious'. Indeed, 'In the buildings there is an enormous quantity of elements which, from a religious-didactic and structural viewpoint, are entirely useless' (1977 [1947]: 3).

Wildridge and Schapiro apart, few other writers took the time to consider the specific context of the carvings in any depth. Although Anderson stated in her book *Misericords: Medieval Life in English Woodcarving* (1954) that 'sacred subjects are comparatively rare on misericords' and that there 'was no need for the carvings on misericords to conform to any logical scheme of decoration, or to convey to an illiterate congregation some dogmatic significance', this she ascribes to their 'humble purpose' which made them 'an unsuitable setting for such lofty themes' (1954: 5). This may be a point worth considering; but what she failed to make clear was any possibility of difference between sculptures in this restricted part of the church and elsewhere. This is by no means unusual for the writing of the period. Anderson's previous works, *The Medieval Carver* (1935) and *Animal Carvings in British Churches* (1938), for example, simply mirror standard art-historical methods of explanation by referring sculpted images to similar images in manuscripts.

The problems and inconsistencies of the Picture Book model have continued in recent years in two books on architectural sculpture that are often quoted as authoritative by respected academics (e.g. Hutton, 1991: 311-14; Melinkoff, 1993: 307, note 1; though both authors have reservations these are, interestingly enough, not with the same book). The two books in question are *Grotesques and Gargoyles: Paganism in the Medieval Church* by Ronald Sheridan and Anne Ross (1975) and *Images of Lust: Sexual Carvings on Medieval Churches* by Anthony Weir and James Jerman (1986). *Grotesques and Gargoyles* will be encountered in more detail later in this chapter with regard to the question of medieval paganism: the concern here is with its explanation of why such images were included in churches in the first place. The authors state that

> The church was very much a place of instruction in medieval times, and to a largely illiterate lay congregation its message must of necessity be conveyed with the assistance of symbols, or picture-writing. By selecting imagery which was familiar to the people the church could the more easily convey its message (Sheridan and Ross, 1975: 12).

Here the didactic argument is given a new twist: the Church conveyed its message not with Christian symbols but with pagan ones. What exactly that message was, however, is unclear, and Sheridan and Ross go little further with their explanation. The assumption that such imagery was selected and directed by clerics to educate lay men and women remains unquestioned. In a similar manner Weir and Jerman 'cannot stress enough the didactic nature of Romanesque ornamentation' (1986: 20). The architectural context of that ornamentation, however, as already pointed out by writers at the turn of the twentieth century such as Mâle and Wildridge, would appear to mitigate against the optimum conditions for didactic imagery – notably the ease of viewing an image. Confusingly, Weir and Jerman are not unaware of the context, noting, with regard to carved corbels, that '[e]ven when placed out of sight, over an aisle roof or high up in a tower, they were considered important enough to bear rich

designs' (*ibid.* 38). However, the ramifications of this comment are ignored and by the end of the paragraph the familiar 'scheme of didactic decoration' is the interpretation favoured (*ibid.*).

Ultimately, the paradox of the Picture Book of the Churches as an interpretative model is that it is both a theory of reception that fails to consider the audience and a theory of artistic creation that considers neither patrons nor artists in any detail. Born out of and animated by the nineteenth century view of the medieval period as an age of faith it assumes both a didactic imperative and ecclesiastical patronage for all the art found in and on medieval religious buildings. Consequently, the meaning of this art is deduced entirely from the assumed intent of its (assumed) ecclesiastical patrons. Medieval architectural sculpture, however, presents some problems. Much of this imagery cannot be seen clearly and few models for it can be found in manuscripts. This has tended to perpetuate the idea that such imagery was simply decorative and carried no particular meaning, that it was carved with infrequent or completely without clerical supervision. If such artistic freedom was the case, then it becomes difficult to ascribe to these images a wholly didactic purpose; the argument begins to appear 'simplistic and unsatisfactory' (Bettey and Taylor, 1982: 22).

Pagan Survival

Whereas most nineteenth-century art historians had found an entirely Christian art in the cathedrals and churches of medieval Europe, as the twentieth century wore on scholars were beginning to think otherwise. From the 1920s to the 1970s the idea of the Middle Ages as a predominantly pagan era gained currency. This theory held that although Christianity had asserted itself as the dominant religion of western Europe it had actually made little headway in the real task of converting the majority of the population, the ordinary man or woman remaining essentially pagan, under a Christian ruling class, until the fifteenth century. Naturally medieval art was implicated and in particular the supposedly less "supervised" architectural art. The

most complete expression of this sentiment came in 1975 when Ronald Sheridan and Anne Ross suggested that a great deal of marginal sculpture represented 'pagan deities dear to the people which the Church was unable to eradicate and therefore allowed to subsist side-by-side with the objects of Christian orthodoxy' (1975: 8).

Although the recognition of pagan imagery within medieval churches was not particularly novel, even for the 1970s (the topic had been discussed within the pages of the *Ecclesiologist* over a century earlier, for example; see Burges, 1857) the idea that paganism had continued relatively unaffected by the presence of Christianity owed a great deal to the popularity of the work of Margaret Murray. In *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (1921) Murray asserted that the witch trials were an attempt to eradicate a systematically organised pre-Christian religion which even by the late Middle Ages was 'in all probability still the chief worship of the bulk of the people' (Murray, 1962 [1921]: 54). The popularity of the book meant that it soon assumed the status of authority on the subject (Thomas, 1971: 614, note 76; see also Hutton, 1999 for comprehensive treatment of the subject).

Whilst pioneering, the study had enormous flaws. Most of her evidence came from the writings of continental demonologists and the confessions of the accused, often extracted by torture. As source material the latter were reliable only in reflecting what the inquisitors wanted to hear. Further, Murray failed to recognise that the rituals described in these confessionals were not antique rites but 'parodies of contemporary Christian ceremonies and social mores' (Hutton, 1991: 303). However, with limited evidence Murray "proved" the existence of a vibrant medieval pagan fertility cult, a vision which persisted until it was dismissed in the 1970s (Thomas, 1971; Cohn, 1975).

Paganism had survived, but not in any original form. Rather it had been transformed by Christianity and survived as folkloric practice. The 'notorious readiness of the early Christian leaders to assimilate elements of the old paganism into their own religious practice, rather than pose too direct a conflict of loyalties in the minds of the new converts' meant that the 'ancient worship of wells, trees and stones was not

so much abolished as modified' (Thomas, 1971: 54). Conversely, if paganism had become Christianized then much of Christianity had itself become paganized, magical powers, for example, being attributed to the shrines of saints. In this sense the history of the medieval Church could be described as the 'gradual and mutual adaptation of Christianity and paganism to each other' (Powicke, 1935: 8).

This did not betray, as Murray had suggested, the presence of an "Old Religion." Neither could those elements identified as pagan in origin be considered separate from the Church; indeed, as work progressed it was increasingly recognised that the dichotomy between 'an élite, church-dominated culture and a 'folkloric' culture of the masses was far from absolute' (Pounds, 2000: 326). If the Church had taken over popular practices, modified them, and 'given them a veneer of sophistication' then these same popular practices had incorporated Christianity into their magical universe (see, for example, Thomas, 1971: 52-57; Van Engen, 1986; Kieckhefer, 1989, 1991; Flint, 1990, 1991; Dukes, 1996; Griffiths, 1996; Schmidt, 1998; Pounds, 2000: 326). The result of this 'multifarious and conflicting mutual influence was a cultural-ideological complex which might be called 'popular Christianity' or 'parish Catholicism' (Gurevich, 1988: 5; see also Geary, 1994: 33). For these reasons it is misleading to speak of a pagan Middle Ages (Milis, 1998a); pagan rites and practices had been absorbed and transformed by the machinery of the Church, which, as Thomas pointed out, increasingly came to appear as 'a vast reservoir of magical power' (1971: 51; see also Milis, 1998b). Medieval religious life was therefore neither entirely Christian nor predominantly pagan, but a curious combination of the magical, folkloric and earthy with the transcendent and spiritual. As Gurevich has summed up, the

> exceptional nature of this culture lies in the strange combination of opposite poles: heaven and earth, spirit and body, gloom and humour, life and death. Holiness can be seen as a fusion of lofty piety and primitive magic, of extreme self-denial and a pride in being the elect, of worldly detachment and greed, of mercy and cruelty. [...] Learning is glorified and ignoramuses are

treated with scorn, and at the same time foolishness, poverty of spirit, even madness, are reckoned the surest way to salvation (Gurevich, 1988: 176).

The 'strangeness and contradiction' that saturated medieval religion is rarely so forcefully expressed as in its art, and in particular, grotesque architectural sculpture (*ibid.* 176). The Picture Book interpretative model was of course the counterpart theory to the view of the medieval period as an age of faith; as historians began to revise this notion and introduce the idea of a flourishing medieval paganism those images that had previously defied interpretation could now be ascribed with confidence to the "unsupervised" craftsman. However, to say, as Sheridan and Ross did some years later, that such carvings were viewed by the people as pagan deities is to ignore the profound transformations of pagan religion into magical practice and their consequent absorption into Christianity (Hutton, 1991: 314). It must be borne in mind that

> [w]hen looking for 'pagan survivals' in the medieval Church, it is not enough for historians to detect parallels, relics or imitations of paganism. It is necessary to demonstrate that certain things, although now existing within a Christian structure, kept alive a memory of, and reverence for, the old deities… [The] reappearance of a pagan image in a Christian concept only demonstrates the survival of paganism itself if it can be shown to have a [pagan] religious purpose and is not being used as an analogy or for its aesthetic value (*ibid.* 289, 297).

Patrons would not have commissioned art antithetical to their faith. Neither can it be assumed that the viewers of these images would have understood them as of pagan origin. Just like its polar opposite, the Picture Book theory, the pagan model fails to consider the context of the images and the specific social, religious and magical perspectives of the society that produced them.

Conclusion

More recent work upon medieval architectural sculpture has challenged the blanket didacticism of the Picture Book theory (Camille, 1992: 84; Benton, 1996: 161). Against definitive interpretation it is suggested that architectural sculpture was likely to be a locus of rich and diverse, multiple or layered meanings (Benton 1996: 160; Goodall, 1995: 324). A more sophisticated argument suggests that marginal sculpture carried different meanings for different audiences. The sculpted trumeau at Souillac, for example, in its invocation of broad cultural metaphors of 'animality linked to human appetite and embodiment' is likely to have been interpreted differently by different groups, whose 'multiple misinterpretations' and 'partial comprehensions' must be seen as co-existant with official interpretations (Camille, 1993a: 52, 53). Ecclesiastical patrons might have read certain images as personifications of vice and sin while the laity could recognise in them people 'on the margins of society – women, drunkards, jongleurs, and fools – who evoked ambivalent attitudes of attraction and suspicion' (Kenaan-Kedar, 1992: 18). That these images were endowed with the power to repel evil is also highly relevant and current in the literature (e.g. Camille, 1992: 70-72) and will figure throughout this thesis.

Clearly, the difficulty in establishing reliable contexts for medieval marginal sculpture has frustrated research. Goodall notes that 'the work of interpreting this sculpture is fraught with difficulties, not least because it has lost much of its contemporary context that might have been critical to an appreciation of its meaning: paint work, the original furnishings of the church and other imagery in statuary and glass' (1995: 323-324; see also Sekules, 1995: 37). The temptation to turn to the greater body of work on illustrated manuscripts for answers to iconographical problems has been great, as illustrated by the tendency to use bestiaries in this way.

Whilst images can convey powerful sensual impressions unmediated by language, the tacit status of art in industrial society as secondary to more technological, rational enterprises, perpetuates a deadening view of the visual. Medieval architectural

sculpture, as this chapter has introduced, has been victim to such processes, which, in combination with the general neglect of the contexts in which these images were made and viewed, has had a disorientating effect upon its study.

Liminal Visions: The Grotesque and the Dark Side of the Sacred

Introduction

Medieval perceptions of the sacred were moulded by the peculiar circumstances surrounding the development and dissemination of Christianity, whose interaction with and assimilation of varieties of paganism created an enduring and complex religious folklore. In this, good and evil were clearly recognisable but not clearly separated. Angels could be as dangerous as demons, and both occupied similar visionary "spaces". No one seems to have doubted that agencies outside the human mind other than the usual objects of sense experience could cause images and thought in the human soul. 'Both the Hebrew and Christian parts of the Bible recount so many instances of such experiences that the pious medieval reader could readily conclude that visions were not that extraordinary a means by which God and spirits – both good and evil – communicated with mortals' (Tobin, 1995: 42). This fluid world was nevertheless anchored in the physical, and especially at sites of concentrated spiritual activity, such as churches. Consequently, we must view medieval ecclesiastical buildings as locations where the "supernatural" (i.e. that which did not conform to cultural definitions of "natural") impinged upon the natural, and indeed, might manifest.

The term "liminal," derived from the Latin for threshold, is an appropriate one to describe such experiences and/or locations. The use of the term liminality in modern scholarship is commonly traced to Arnold van Gennep's work on rites of passage (1960 [1909]). Van Gennep suggested that all such rites are marked by three

distinct phases; an initial separation, in which the individual or individuals are detached from the prevailing, familiar set of cultural conditions; a liminal period, during which the characteristics of the ritual subject are ambiguous; and finally, aggregation or reabsorption into the community, in which the subject returns to a stable, albeit new, condition. The anthropologist Victor Turner explored the liminal phase of such rituals in further detail in his book *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969). Here he identified liminal entities as 'neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial' (Turner, 1977 [1969]: 95). Thus 'secular distinctions of rank and status disappear or are homogenized' as the ritual subject in the liminal phase is 'reduced or ground down to a uniform condition to be fashioned anew and endowed with additional powers to enable them to cope with their new station in life' (*ibid.*).

Liminal situations and roles are often regarded as dangerous and inauspicious, and, as Turner suggests, are 'almost everywhere attributed with magico-religious properties (*ibid.* 108). This is due to the difficulty of classifying the liminal subject, experience or place in terms of traditional criteria of classification: in fleeing the definitive the liminal is unstable and may be regarded as polluting as well as sacred. This conception of the holy as dangerous and impure as well as benevolent is a paradox generally unfamiliar to the industrialized west (Bataille, 1985 [1929/30]: 96; 1985 [1939]: caption to figure 15). Characterised by excess and indefinability, the liminal therefore represents the uncertainty of the threshold, the gaps or transitional points within the prevailing system of knowledge. As Julia Kristeva notes with regard to the abject, this is 'the place where meaning collapses' (1982: 2). Such a fundamental threat to cultural and individual order, the removal of the basic points of reference which guide and ground us in the phenomenal world, must be well-protected if social stability is to prevail. Understandably, authority has vested interests in policing these weak spots, discouraging their investigation through the placing of taboo. Yet these weak spots (from the perspective of a cultural system of meaning) are also points of contact with what the same system cannot limit through definition. These areas of transition between clearly defined spaces and concepts are zones of great vulnerability as well as great (unofficial, non-institutional) power, vulnerable for

being a "gap" between definitions, powerful because such a gap is also a point of connection with the energy of the unknown and unformed.

Representing the liminal is an attempt to picture this mysterious force or excessive, abnormal energy. One of the most suitable styles of art for this task, indeed, one that has been called 'an aesthetic of liminality' (Sechter, 1994), is the grotesque.

Identity Crisis: The Name of the Grotesque

Since the sixteenth century, art history has used the term grotesque to describe a particular style of decorative imagery characterised by the presence of fantastic creatures formed from human, animal, vegetable and inorganic elements (see chapter 1). From its inception, however, the term was synonymous with any perceived deviation from the morally and aesthetically acceptable or the "natural" order. As a concept of the deviant and abnormal, the range of the material can be extended radically. Kuryluk writes that the

> meaning of the grotesque is constituted by the norm which it contradicts: the order it destroys, the values it upsets, the authority and morality it derides, the religion it ridicules, the harmony it breaks up, the heaven it brings down to earth, the position of classes, races, and sexes it reverses, the beauty and goodness it questions. The word "grotesque" makes sense only if one knows what the "norm" represents – in art and in life (1987: 11).

In this sense grotesque has a common use as a derogatory term. In the nineteenth century the term became allied with medieval architectural sculpture. Today, this 'dimension of intense and exaggerated forms' tends to be characterised as 'a symbolic category of art which expresses psychic undercurrents from below the surface of life, such as nameless fears, nightmares, Angst' (Fingestein, 1984: 419).

At the heart of the grotesque is a serious play with convention. Hybrid, composite, distorted and exaggerated forms prevail; contexts are displaced, boundaries transgressed. Using 'debasement, distortion, displacement, and heterogeneity' as its key techniques, grotesque imagery comments upon the forms, categories, hierarchies and conventions that have become part and parcel of a consensus reality or prevailing worldview (Kuryluk, 1987: 301). However, this does not necessarily mean that the grotesque image is diametrically opposed to the normative: on the contrary, grotesque forms tend to blend elements of the familiar together in unfamiliar ways. The effect is a visual paradox, a recognisable but radical otherness.

Herein lies the fascination with the grotesque: it is potentially limitless, a realm of disrupted meanings and unintelligible unions (Harpham, 1982: 3; Ducornet, 1999: 28). Ruskin was among the first to notice the intermingling of qualities generally perceived as opposed or discordant:

> First, then, it seems to me that the grotesque is, in almost all cases, composed of two elements, one ludicrous, the other fearful; that, as one or the other of these elements prevails, the grotesque falls into two branches, sportive grotesque and terrible grotesque; but that we cannot legitimately consider it under these two aspects, because there are hardly any examples which do not in some degree combine both elements: there are few grotesques so utterly playful as to be overcast with no shade of fearfulness, and few so fearful as absolutely to exclude all ideas of jest (Ruskin, 1904, XI: 151).

Privileging "both-and" to "either-or" the grotesque is synonymous with those elements that cannot be categorised, or, at least only poorly categorised according to particular cultural organisations of knowledge. The dismissive use of the word is perhaps not unconnected to the unease generated by this indefinability:

> Grotesqueries both require and defeat definition: they are neither so regular and rhythmical that they settle easily into our categories, nor so unprecedented that we do not recognize them at all. They stand at a margin

of consciousness between the known and the unknown, the perceived and
the unperceived, calling into question the adequacy of our ways of organizing
the world, of dividing the continuum of experience into knowable particles
(Harpham, 1982: 3).

At the limits of comprehension, the word grotesque may hence be taken to designate
'a condition of being just out of focus, just beyond the reach of language. It
accommodates the things left over when the categories of language are exhausted; it
is a defense against silence when other words have failed' (*ibid.* 3-4). Characterised by
an 'energy which takes its own forms and goes its own way' (Chesterton, 1936 [1903]:
149), grotesque imagery therefore operates in the gaps between meaning and
meaningful form.

Thus it is my contention that medieval architectural sculpture, so often composed of
grotesque elements, is poorly understood not because its images are inherently
meaningless but rather because they carry an excess of meaning which serves to place
them at the limits of understanding: they literally embody the incomprehensible.
Coupled with an understanding of medieval religious buildings as liminal locations
and liminality as spiritually dangerous as well as potent, a context is established in
which these images are no mere ornament but vital presences that serve to demarcate
and animate sacred space as well as protect the building and its users from the
malevolent aspects of this ambiguous energy. Into this basic theoretical ground may
be sown other possibilities, for example moral interpretations.

Grotesque Bodies in Medieval Art and Life

The grotesque might be considered to operate via the medium of encounter. In
figurative terms, for example, it repeatedly draws attention, through distortion and
transgression, to the boundaries deemed to define "human". Thus '[m]onstrous and
grotesque figures are generated by operations upon the periphery of the body,

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undoing its coherence and thereby its separation from other bodies and from the world' (Dorrian, 2000: 313). A battery of manipulative techniques can be employed here. Bodies may be divided and fragmented, the constituent parts then mixed together in what appears to be a random fashion before reassembly. Parts may be multiplied to excess, or removed altogether. Individual features are elongated, compressed, enlarged or reduced in size, displaced. Parts of different species may be fused to create hybrid beings and fantastic creatures (see Kuryluk, 1987: 301-7).

Bodily ambiguity underpins Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of "Grotesque Realism" (1984: 315). Bakhtin suggests that 'the artistic logic of the grotesque image ignores the closed, smooth, and impenetrable surface of the body and retains only its excresences (sprouts, buds) and orifices, only that which leads beyond the body's limited space or into the body's depths' (Bakhtin, 1984: 317-18). Accordingly, those sites where the body transgresses its own boundaries are the most important in its life:

> if we consider the grotesque image in its extreme aspect, it never presents an individual body; the image consists of orifices and convexities that present another, newly conceived body. It is a point of transition in a life eternally renewed, the inexhaustible vessel of death and conception (*ibid.* 318).

Thus 'eating, drinking, defecation and other elimination (sweating, blowing of the nose, sneezing), as well as copulation, pregnancy, dismemberment, swallowing up by another body' might be considered among the key themes of the grotesque bodily image (*ibid.* 317).[1]

Grotesque reconfiguration presupposes the conceptual existence of an ideal body, which, in terms of the human form is a concept inseparable from a culture's moral values (Camille, 1994a). For the medieval period the perfect human body, made in

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[1] This merging of inner worlds with exterior spaces is a central feature of the grotesque in modern art as well (see Taylor, 1993; Betterton, 1996: 130-160; Baker, 2000: 86-92; Malbert, 2000).

the image of God, embodied divine law, and, by inference, Christian truth and meaning. Indeed, in the Book of Genesis the creation of meaning runs concurrent with the creation of the physical world, the process of separating and naming, of dividing the light from the dark and the formed from the unformed. With each division (or manifestation) a name is given to 'fix' the newly created category, both to separate it out from, and to prevent it slipping back into, the undifferentiated void (Gen 1: 5, 10).[2] Names signify the creation not only of things but a symbolic order within which those things might be understood in relation to each other. (To be without a name betokens a dangerous instability which Harpham rightly suggests is the grotesque condition: so the term is a last ditch attempt to speak of that which is properly nameless, unformed, and outside the categories of knowledge [Harpham, 1982: 3]). Hence naming is both 'the prerequisite of a meaningfully ordered world' as well as 'an expression of control' (Fewell and Gunn, 1996: 17): if the Word made possible the creative potential latent in the void it served to delimit it also.

Yet if order and meaning depend upon categorical boundaries, then the maintenance of those boundaries is crucial. Accordingly, meaning might be perceived as God-given but in no way is it divinely maintained, and blurring the boundaries between 'the categories of creation' (Douglas, 1966: 54) runs the risk of "undoing" divine order by reintroducing chaos. Potentially transgressive material must be limited or excluded if disruption is to be minimized and the prevailing organisation of perception preserved. In this need to preserve a particular vision of created order may be found the prerequisite for taboos and other restrictions, for what is defined as unclean 'is not necessarily dirty or loathsome in itself, but that which blurs categories of difference within a given symbolic system' (Betterton, 1996: 139). Hence ambiguous subjects invite taboo for their confusion of orthodox definitions (Leach, 1964: 37-38).

In figurative terms anything that detracts from the ideal is therefore open to suspicion for it deviates from the divine plan. Since its inception Christianity had

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[2] The idea of divine will creating form from the formless was given substance throughout the

articulated these assumptions, associating corporeal deformity with sin (Sachs, 1969: xix). As the Book of Leviticus (21: 16-23) makes plain the physically imperfect man must be excluded from the priesthood lest his imperfection – 'synonymous with uncleanness and impurity' – defile the Lord's sanctuary, a requirement for the higher clerical orders that persisted from the early medieval period until 1917 (Melinkoff, 1993: 113-114). Medieval exegesis cemented the connections between bodily deformity, disease and madness, guilt and immorality, and the associations percolated throughout medieval culture in general (Doob, 1974: 1-30). The Vices might be pictured riding on apes or personified as apes, themselves commonly perceived as deformed humans (Janson, 1952: 36). Leprosy, the deforming sickness believed to be sexually transmitted, was widely seen as a punishment for moral depravity (Richards, 1977: 70; Bynum, 1995: 327). In a fifteenth-century poem the infection is sent by a council of planetary gods for the crimes of lust, blasphemy and infidelity (Friedman, 1985: 12).

Clearly, the 'idea that deformity was a punishment for sin was part of the folkloristic tradition' (Friedman, 1981a: 187; Braidotti, 1994: 139). Diseased or monstrous progeny frequented medieval folklore, their conception blamed upon deviant sexual practices that violated categories, for example, between human and divine, human and demonic, human and animal, and clean and unclean.[3] One of the earliest stories relates how the encounter of the rebel angels with mortal women (Genesis 6) produced a terrible brood, the giant, destructive and perpetually hungry 'mighty men', the Nephilim ("unnaturally begotten men" or "bastards", from *nepel*, "abortion" or "miscarriage") (McKenzie, 1965: 612). It has been convincingly argued that the source of the story, the apocryphal Book of Enoch, influenced such literary works as the poem Beowulf and therefore provided a means for its transmission into

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Middle Ages in the image of God as primal architect of the cosmos (see Rudolph, 1999: 10).
[3] Etymologically, the word "hybrid", literally an animal or plant produced by crossing two different species, varieties, races or breeds, highlights these interconnected paths of meaning. Two sins in particular – pride and lust – resonate. In his analysis of the chimera, a fabulous tripartite beast with the body and head of a lion, the tail of a dragon and on its back, the head of a goat, Giovanni Bompiani states that 'it is from *hubris* that the word "hybrid," which describes the chimera, derives' (1989: 381). An alternative route, from '*hubrizein*, lecherous behaviour' is a further possibility (Walker, 1983: 419).

mainstream medieval culture (Melinkoff, 1979; 1981). Another Judeo-Christian folkloric tradition attributed the proliferation of demons to Adam and Eve's 130 year abstinence from sexual activity, a period characterised by numerous nocturnal couplings with male and female demonic spirits (Patai, 1990: 224) while the increasingly severe legislation against bestiality in the Middle Ages was, in its latter stages, largely fuelled by a fear of producing hybrid and demonic children (Salisbury, 1991). Sexual activity that transgressed cultural categories of "clean" and "unclean" was considered another source of deformed progeny, as for example the belief that intercourse with a menstruating woman – traditionally perceived as unclean – would produce demonic offspring (see Crawford, 1981: 59-62). Lepers, 'those deformed children of sin and abjection' were themselves often understood to be 'conceived in the uncleanness of menses' (Camporesi, 1995: 119).

The close association of physical deformity with sin and evil provided the foundation for the portrayal of evil in medieval art (Jordan, 1986). The image of the devil as a monster composed of human and animal parts was widespread, as were beliefs that the devil in human guise 'always had to be identifiable by some deformity' (Lorenzi, 1997: 22-27; Melinkoff, 1993: 115). Shapeshifting proposed a precarious mutable body, one that did not conform to categorical definitions but transgressed them at will. Other transgressors of divine law, the damned, were typically represented with 'distorted and beastly human features' (Kuryluk, 1987: 13).

That deformity and sin were joined in negative symbiosis, written in the very flesh, meant that the body could be "read" as a reliable guide to the state of one's soul (Dale, 2001: 405, 403; see also Friedman, 1981b). Corporeality thus becomes the primary site of encounter, for if 'a person was found to have imperfect physical features, which denoted a tendency to certain vices, in theory that unfortunate person, if wise and virtuous, could struggle and successfully resist the vices accompanying his physique' (Melinkof, 1993: 116). The assumption was, however, that since the wise and virtuous were but few, character and behaviour were determined by one's physical features.

Deformity, then, in twisting the "ideal" human form away from the divine blueprint was closely associated with the corporeal fluidity that medieval thought attributed to the malevolent demonic. What was really at stake, however, was "humanness". Medieval theologians owed a considerable debt to the classical view that held reason to be the distinguishing feature of humanity (Rudolph, 1990: 123). It was the capacity to reason that was believed to define humans from animals. With reason came spirituality. Animals, lacking this capacity were correspondingly perceived as soulless: they would not participate in the resurrection (Salisbury, 1994: 5). The conviction that animals lacked reason and an immortal soul 'formed the basis for the belief in the "natural" dominion of humans over animals, which supplemented the biblical verse and indeed determined interpretations of it' (*ibid.* 6). Women, deemed closer to the animal world by virtue of their biology, were tainted by association and often similarly regarded (see chapters 7 and 8).

Accordingly, anything that weakened or destroyed the reasoning capacity in man might be considered to have the power to "deform" his image, to remove the distinction that was perceived to separate men from women and men and women from animals. Loss of form therefore carried grave spiritual implications for if 'the ordered body reflected the harmonious nature of the godly soul, corporeal deformations furnished metaphors for the soul's potential degeneracy' (Dale, 2001: 408). In losing human form the soul was at risk.

Posture, intimately related to morality and spirituality (Barasch, 1976; Cherewatuk, 1986), was therefore implicated. In the twelfth century Hugh of St-Victor wrote that

> Just as inconstancy of mind brings forth irregular motions of the body, so also the mind is strengthened and made constant when the body is restrained through the process of discipline. And little by little, the mind is composed inwardly to calm, when through the custody of discipline its bad motions are not allowed free play outwardly. The perfection of virtue is attained when the members of the body are governed and ordered through the inner custody of the mind (cited in Dale, 2001: 407).

If the mind could be controlled by controlling the body, then an out of control body signalled a wild and irrational mind. Bodies that did not appear upright or calm but chaotic and distorted such as dancers, acrobats and their accomplices, musicians, were open to such interpretation. Figures of violent movement and struggle whose irregular motion might be read as a token of inner disquiet, such as fighting soldiers and hunters chasing beasts, also served to emphasize the instinctual over the rational. Sensual and erotic activities might be similarly perceived. Drawing upon this pool of imagery allowed the creation of powerful figurative scenes. At the Abbey of the Madeleine at Vézelay, for example, one face of a capital depicts a musician playing a horn while a naked demon with wild flaming hair gropes the breasts of a naked woman upon the opposite side (Dale, 2001: 412). Such orgiastic excess expresses the danger of relinquishing reason to physical desire, for any loss of control of the disruptive forces within carried an enormous price: not only the loss of one's humanity but the loss of one's soul. All of these examples appear to have given up the power of reason to become a slave to one's passions, violent, sexual, or otherwise. In this state it was believed that one was incapable of worship and thus became like the irrational animals (Rudolph, 1990: 123).

It is within such a context that the doubts expressed by Bernard of Clairvaux regarding the appropriateness of such carvings as material aids to contemplation – the traditional role of imagery in Benedictine and Cluniac monasticism – might be read with greater insight.[4] Bernard, as spokesman for the reformed and initially ascetic Cistercian order was particularly vocal with regards to monastic indulgences and the *Apologia for Abbot William* is traditionally seen as directed against what he saw as the excesses of Cluniac cloister carvings. It is evident that Bernard was no ascetic when it came to prose, however, and as such the excerpt has long been valued by art historians for the highly articulate image it presents of monstrous forms in Romanesque art (Schapiro, 1977 [1947]: 6, 8).

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[4] The appropriate passage from the *Apologia* may be found in Schapiro, 1977 [1947]: 6 and Rudolph, 1990: 11-12. For a concise introduction to the context in which Bernard wrote the text see Matarasso, 1993.

Bernard's main objection to the carvings pivots upon the subtle power of the fantastic shapes to distract the brothers from the art that lay at the basis of monastic life – reading and meditating upon scripture (Rudolph, 1990: 104-124). The seductive power of the grotesque forms represented a profound spiritual danger, for although curiosity was a necessary and appropriate monastic attribute if directed toward spiritual matters it was perilous should the focus of attention become the material world. In this sense, any image presented a potential threat to the monk for it carried the power to direct attention towards the world of the senses, thus negating the renunciation of the world and the quest for the divine. Picturing such irrational, physical, and hybrid subjects simply exacerbated the problem, inviting the sin of mental wandering or *curiositas* (Carruthers, 1998: 82-87), which, as it has been pointed out on the basis of his eloquent and informed prose, Bernard was just as susceptible to as any other (Schapiro, 1977 [1947]: 8). Indeed, Bernard indicates three categories of iconographical types 'which he feels lend themselves to spiritual distraction: monstrous and hybrid forms, animals, and men engaged in worldly pursuits' (Rudolph, 1990: 120). In medieval thought seeing was understood to be so powerful that it could 'leave its tactile imprint upon matter' (Camille, 1996a: 19; Janson, 1952: 97). Every 'sense experience', according to William of St-Thierry, the figure to whom Bernard's *Apologia* was addressed, 'changes the person experiencing it in some way into that which is sensed' (Rudolph, 1990: 117-118). Accordingly, if one could become what one saw or experienced, then 'the monk who indulges in idle curiosity in viewing the hybrids of the cloister capitals or of his books takes on some of the conflict of nature inherent in them and so is proscribed from the harmony of union with God' (*ibid.*).

The seductive power of grotesque forms is related intimately to their deformity. As Williams notes,

> [l]oss of form entails two contrary attitudes: attraction and repulsion. On the one hand, disorder and formlessness deprive the mind of a habitual structure necessary for understanding and acting and, ultimately, for being. On the

other, disorder frees the mind in certain circumstances from the restrictions of order and reason. Loss of what we have called logical, or scientific, form demolishes reason and its categories so that the mind is initially confronted with absurdity (1996: 77).

The impossibility of assimilating such "absurd" material, however, enforces the taboo on its encounter which forces it to occupy an abject realm at the edges of civilized life, 'at the boundary of what is assimilable, thinkable' (Kristeva, 1982: 18; Creed, 1996). Outside of categorical frameworks of knowledge, such heterogeneous material is simultaneously beyond rational comprehension, opposed 'to any philosophical system' (Bataille, 1985 [1929/30]: 97). It is, quite literally, expelled by theory (Hollier, 1988: xix).

Bernard of Clairvaux was aware of such difficulties of comprehension. In his sermons he drew a contrast between *imitatio* and *admiratio*, the former being that which can be consumed, appropriated, and experienced, the latter that which cannot be incorporated. Bernard offers the example of a golden goblet: when it is offered 'we consume, absorb, incorporate the drink (that is, imitate the virtues), but we give back (that is, we wonder at) the goblet' (Bynum, 1997: 12). Thus we wonder 'at what we cannot in any sense incorporate, or consume, or encompass in our mental categories; we wonder at mystery, at paradox' (*ibid.*). The dilemma of radical otherness thus presents itself as unknowable; only its shadow, the 'blind stain', offers the opportunity of a partial understanding (Foucault, 1970: 326).

For these reasons, '[e]xtremes of form and of place were closely linked in antiquity and the Middle Ages' (Friedman, 1981a: 35), exemplified in the tradition of monstrous races inhabiting exotic geographical locations (in relation to Europe) such as India or Ethiopia (see also Wittkower, 1942; de Waal Malefijt, 1968; Roy, 1975; Kappler, 1980; Campbell, 1988; Cohen, 1994, 1996; Daston and Park, 1998; Hassig, 1999c; Fleck, 2000). Certainly, their location at the perceived margins of the world's geography was 'no whim of erudite discourse, but a necessity, given their ontologically resistant composition' (Cohen, 1994: 21). Firmly located in these

(conceptual) geographical margins such monsters, physically deformed and morally deviant, provided 'an aesthetic contrast as a clearly sub-human other' to European civilization and as such 'posed little threat to the central order' (Fleck, 2000: 385; Campbell, 1988: 82). Moreover, the fear of pollution, of becoming a monster oneself, might be used to protect these boundaries. Within this context it is notable that leper hospitals were often located on the outskirts of medieval settlements (Gilchrist, 1994a: 47-49).

Any political imperative, however, 'to reject and eliminate the debasing "low" conflicts powerfully and unpredictably with a desire for this Other' (Stallybrass and White, 1986: 4-5). These 'low domains, apparently expelled as 'Other', return as the object of nostalgia, longing and fascination' (*ibid.* 191). Despite all attempts at exclusion, then, "high" culture is both dependent upon and includes the low symbolically,

> as a primary eroticized constituent of its own fantasy life. The result is a
> mobile, conflictual fusion of power, fear and desire in the construction of
> subjectivity: a psychological dependence upon precisely those Others which
> are being rigorously opposed and excluded at the social level (*ibid.* 5).

The repulsive, obscene, monstrous and deformed, pushed to the edges of culture, provided 'the mess that made Europe's imagined order possible' (Schick, 1999: 50). In this light the 'socially peripheral' becomes 'symbolically central' (Babcock, 1978: 32), a necessary counterpoint by which one can define all those values deemed appropriate not only to civility, but to physicality as well.

Divine Deformity: The Obscene and the Sacred

Although medieval culture may be distinguished by its integrated structure, its 'specific non-differentiation, the inseparability of its various spheres', this does by no means 'guarantee freedom from contradiction' (Gurevich, 1985: 9-10). Hence despite

its integration into everyday life the ultimate other in medieval experience was, perhaps, the world of the supernatural or sacred.

"Sacred" derives from the Latin word *sacer* (holy). Like the associated term, "profane", it originally identified the different uses of architectural space in and around classical temples. Whereas *profanum* referred to the space in front of the temple precinct in which public rites were regularly performed, *sacer* suggested the enclosed and restricted space of the temple itself. *Sacer* and *profanus* 'were therefore linked to specific and quite distinct locations; one of these, a spot referred to as *sacer*, was either walled off or otherwise set apart – that is to say, *sanctum* – within the other, surrounding space available for profane use' (Colpe, 1987: 511). The western concept of the sacred as something other, 'placed apart from everyday things or places, so that its special significance can be recognized, and rules regarding it obeyed' (Hubert, 1994: 11) is therefore visible in the classical heritage.

Modern scholarship on the sacred is inextricably linked to the work of the French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858-1917). In *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912; first English translation 1915), Durkheim characterized the sacred and profane as two 'distinct sorts of reality' separated from each other by a 'sharply drawn line of demarcation' (1915: 212; see also 38, 308). Although a few anthropologists and sociologists have supported this dichotomy, Durkheim has earned far more criticism than praise especially with regard to the universality of these categories.[5]

One of Durkheim's less controversial assertions, however, concerned the "character" of the sacred. In his native tongue the concept of the sacred included and still includes a meaning that is now obsolete or rare in the English language – the sacred as 'accursed or horrible, as something devoted to a divinity for destruction, and hence criminal, impious, wicked, infamous' (Pickering, 1984: 124). Durkheim was well aware of this 'profoundly ambiguous, dangerous' (Bataille, 1985 [1939]: 245, n1) nature of the sacred, writing that

[t]here are two sorts of sacredness, the propitious and the unpropitious, and not only is there no break of continuity between these two opposed forms, but also one object may pass from the one to the other without changing its nature. The pure is made out of the impure and reciprocally. It is in the possibility of these transmutations that the ambiguity of the sacred consists (1915: 411).

Such ambiguity characterizes medieval experience of the sacred. Those who managed to enter this zone, for example, by fasting,

moved in a sphere of supernatural 'stupor and excess', in an ambiguous and alarming space which was inhabited not only by angels but also by demons, who also do not eat; they found themselves in a country where saintliness and degradation exchanged roles, and where the sacred could also disguise the perverse face of wickedness (Camporesi, 1990: 149).

This 'hazy confine between saintliness and demonism' (*ibid.* 150) could be identified with physical as well as psychic space. In depicting monstrous races at the very edges of world maps, medieval cartographers had not only set a limit to the known world but marked out a transitional zone between the human world and the great beyond. The tradition of depicting God holding the world meant that on some medieval maps the monstrous races, in their marginal dwellings, are positioned much closer than humans to the divine (see, for example, Camille, 1992: 15). Thus the monster forms a "bridge" between the material and spiritual worlds, simultaneously participating in both (Williams, 1996: 13).

Architectural sculpture sometimes presents a clear example of monstrous imagery in such a mediating role. At the church of St Nicholas at Barfreston (Kent), the elaborately carved tympanum above the south door (see chapter 8) represents two

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[5] See Pickering, 1984: 143, and Brück, 1999: 317-319 for commentary upon the modern

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sphinx or harpy-like creatures, a mermaid and a griffin, flanking the feet of Christ. Above them, next to the body and head of Christ within a *vesica piscis* are images of angels and crowned heads. Angels, heads and mythical creatures all appear within scrolling foliage, which serves to unify the carving as well as suggest that these figures are united in other ways. Like their position at the edges of the known world on medieval maps where the known world dissolves into the sea and/or then into the hands of God, the fantastic creatures are located at the closest point of the carving to humans, appearing to demarcate the liminal space between the world of the divine and the measured and known world of human society. Located at the edge of the unknown these are images that startle and alert one to the presence of this otherness, realised by the full figure of Christ and the associated angels carved above but also embodied in and articulated by the physical building of the church. It is possible that tympana were conceived as symbolic visual spaces (Hicks, 1993: 267), and in this example the composite creatures whose bodies are only partially familiar certainly seem to inhabit a transitional zone between the familiar and the otherworldly.

In medieval thought, the idea of wilderness provided a conceptual location for such monstrous and semi-divine beings whose physical hybridity represented moral as well as social danger. For nascent Christianity this was chiefly identified with the desert.[6] Populated by demons such as the satyr-like *seirim*, the *shedhim* (demons of the storm), the *tannin* (monstrous howlers), and the demonness Lilith and her children, this 'gap in nature' was perceived to open the doors to a particular religious delirium 'generated by the encounter between the darkness of guilt and the light of promise' (Bartra, 1994: 47-48). A long tradition of desert recluses seeking unmediated contact with the divine runs throughout the early history of Christianity, ultimately forming the foundations of what would become monasticism. The 'dual notion of the desert as a place in which darkness and the abyss are found together with paradise and hope' was instrumental in the birth of these communities (*ibid.* 49). No attempt to dwell in the sacred could be without phantasmic malevolence. This is crucial to any

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creation of the ritual/secular distinction and its absence in many non-western societies.
[6] Other locations identified with wilderness included the forest and the sea, both of which were perceived to be inhabited by monstrous beings.

consideration of architectural sculpture. If the pursuit of the spiritual life was beset with, indeed, inseparable from, demonic activity, and if the motivation for the resurgence of monumental stone sculpture was primarily monastic, then it is perhaps unsurprising that imagery expressive of such an ambivalent supernatural realm should pervade medieval work. The monastic experience provided the template for a rich tradition of carving that sought to visualize the invisible forces that saturated everyday life: ambiguous physical form went with the liminal terrain. Indeed, the further one progressed along the path to liberation the closer one came to the edges of humanness and anchorites and hermits frequently 'came to mimic the animal nature they were fighting against' (*ibid.* 60). The bestial saint and the demonic god dwelt in similar territory.

Portents, as direct encounters with the divine, embodied similar paradoxes. As Isidore of Seville (c560-636) noted, a 'portent does not arise contrary to nature, but contrary to what nature is understood to be' (cited in Williams, 1996: 13). Thus a portent exposes human constructions of nature by uniting the divided and framing the abject in heterogeneous and obscene forms – some of the key techniques of grotesque. Indeed, obscenity, from the Latin *obscenum* (ill-omened) 'belongs to the technical vocabulary of ancient divination' (Merceron, 1998: 334, n9). This sense of obscenity as prophetic,

> firmly grounds the word into the sphere of the sacred, into a realm out of the reach of ordinary human existence but which under special circumstances sends out 'signals' or 'messengers.' From the practice of oscinoscopy, the Latin word *obscenus* came to specialize in the sinister side of the sacred, which corresponds to what Hindu religion calls the 'Sacred of the Left Hand,' a sacrality of disruption and disorder, emphasizing the chaotic vitality of Nature (*ibid.*).

The sanctity of ambiguous form is reflected in the ancient and widespread belief in monsters as divine portents, commonly but not always predicting widespread calamity (Glenister, 1964: 16-18; Smith, 1986: 16; Park and Daston, 1981: 23;

Braidotti, 1996: 139). In this role the monster appears as ambassador for the 'dark side of the sacred', a figure that reveals hidden or occluded aspects of the universe (the Latin root of monster, *monstrare*, means 'to show forth') (Williams, 1996: 4). In this sense the deformed and obscene might be seen as belonging to the divine.

As embodiments of the threshold, monsters therefore represent 'the in between, the mixed, the ambivalent as implied in the ancient Greek root of the word *monsters*, *teras*, which means both horrible and wonderful, object of aberration and adoration' (Braidotti: 1994: 77). This liminal form is useful, for it allows a symbolic point of connection with otherness. Some strands of medieval thought recognised this capacity and the work of one anonymous author provided a coherent, and ultimately, enormously influential, treatise. The writings of Pseudo-Dionysius were first introduced to the west in the sixth century and are now seen to reflect a combination of Syrian Christianity and Athenian Neoplatonism.[7] In the ninth century the authorship was attributed to St Denis while two centuries later Abbot Suger would find the inspiration for his own architectural schemes in these texts (Von Simson, 1956). Reference to or commentary upon Dionysian thought was ubiquitous among medieval writers including Thomas Aquinas, 'throughout whose work he is cited, after Aristotle, more than any other authority' (Williams, 1996: 23; Boenig, 1997: 36-37).

The mystical view that human cognition is inadequate when faced with 'the limitlessness of the real' (Williams, 1996: 6) was characteristic of Neoplatonic thought. Pseudo-Dionysius wrote:

> Just as the senses can neither grasp nor perceive the things of the mind, just
> as representation and shape cannot take in the simple and the shapeless, just

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[7] Originally, the author was believed to be, as claimed, Dionysius the Areopagite, the disciple of Paul mentioned in Acts 17: 34. However, nineteenth-century scholars noted a marked influence in the works from the Athenian Neoplatonic school of Proclus which dated them to the late fifth century, proving that the attribution of authorship was false. Until then, however, and certainly throughout the Middle Ages, the works carried the status of apostolic authority and were venerated as sacred.

as corporeal form cannot lay hold of the intangible and incorporeal, by the same standard of truth beings are surpassed by the infinity beyond being, intelligences by that oneness which is beyond intelligence. Indeed, the inscrutable One is out of reach of every rational process. Nor can any words come up to the inexpressible Good, this One, this Source of all unity, this supra-existent Being. Mind beyond mind, word beyond speech, it is gathered up by no discourse, by no intuition, by no name (Pseudo-Dionysius, 1987: 49-50, 588B)

Pseudo-Dionysius's thought provided for the Middle Ages a method of working toward that which is beyond cognition, beyond human representations and concepts, and therefore, that which cannot be approached through intellectual demonstration. At its core is the perception that naming something, in differentiating it from other things, imposes a limit that separates it from its divine unity with other beings and with other things. Hence the Dionysian project aims at the dismantling of language via a 'strategy of disarrangement' in order to step beyond its limitations (Turner, 1995: 8). This strategy centred around negation since 'positive affirmations are always unfitting to the hiddenness of the inexpressible' (Pseudo-Dionysius, 1987: 150, 141A). Such a fundamentally negative theology legitimates grotesque imagery since, as Denys put it, 'manifestation through dissimilar shapes is more correctly to be applied to the invisible' (*ibid.*). In this sense non-differentiation and 'disorder, since they are proper to the divine, have precedence over order and differentiation, and in the aesthetic expression of the idea, the monster functions to signify this fundamental reality' (Williams, 1996: 84). In Denysian thought monstrous images are the least inappropriate visual expression of God; they are the closest that it is possible to get to representing the numinous.

Monstrous and deformed imagery also served to reduce the danger of associating the image with the concept signified, for the 'more unwonted and bizarre the sign, it was thought, the less likely was the beholder to equate it with the reality it represented' (*ibid.* 4). The danger posed by the materiality of images was henceforth considerably reduced. Denys stated:

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High flown shapes could well mislead someone into thinking that the heavenly bodies are golden or gleaming men, glamorous, wearing lustrous clothing, giving off flames which cause no harm, or that they have other similar beauties with which the word of God has fashioned the heavenly minds. It was to avoid this kind of misunderstanding among those incapable of rising above visible beauty that the pious theologians so wisely and upliftingly stooped to incongruous dissimilarities, for by doing this they took account of our inherent tendency toward the material and our willingness to be lazily satisfied by base images. At the same time they enabled that part of the soul which longs for the things above actually to rise up. Indeed the sheer crassness of the signs is a goad so that even the materially inclined cannot accept that it could be permitted or true that the celestial and divine sights could be conveyed by such shameful things (Pseudo-Dionysius, 1987: 150, 141A-141C).

Within such a framework the image was no longer a tangible object but a sign, a pointer towards the ineffable realm concealed by semblance (Camille, 1989: 13). In this way, the negative status of material form endemic to Christian morality whose manipulation into art or architecture 'implied an inappropriate faith in the permanence of material things in this world' might be transformed into a 'witness to a higher truth' (Onians, 1988: 112). Dionysian aesthetics, in employing 'the most inappropriate and unnatural relation between sign and signified' therefore aimed to reveal, through 'the deforming of the bond between like and like' the 'true but hidden process of meaning' (Williams, 1996: 40). We may regard this breaking apart of the conventions governing human understanding as 'the theoretical basis of the grotesque' (*ibid.*).

Conclusion

This chapter has explored liminality and its visual manifestations, of which the grotesque is one strand. Grotesque images, through representing that which weakens accepted categories, draw attention time and again to the idea of the boundary, the paradox of which is that it is a threshold as well as a limit. As the visual representation of such paradox the grotesque is both marginal and liminal at once, defining the edges of culture as well as providing a threshold into the forbidden, to other (unknown) means of order. Hence the grotesque predicates upon the medium of encounter: it heralds the other. Otherness is culturally specific and manipulated by authority to define whatever is deemed acceptable in all areas of life, for example, religion, sexual behaviour, or preparation of food. A repository for the abject, experiencing the other is often accompanied by fear and repulsion for it poses the threat of dissolution, the destabilizing of cultural norms and identities. As thresholds, boundaries provide points of connection with the unnamed and unknown; they are dangerous and powerful places for the very reason that in these zones cultural conventions are permeable and diffuse.

Form is inextricably linked with meaning and morality. So close are the connections, in fact, that any alteration of one carries serious ramifications for the other two. The creation of form in many cultures is ascribed to a creator deity and is thus not only a simultaneous creation of meaning (articulation of difference being a prerequisite of a meaningful world), but a creation of divine meaning. In figurative terms any transgression of the boundaries of form therefore not only renders that figure meaningless or ambiguous within the cultural system of classification but also evil for it has undone or adapted the divine order of things. Thus figures of evil in western art typically bear distorted features or bodies, or indeed composite bodies. Behaviour considered morally corrupt disfigures the flesh; activities that contort the posture are sinful. What is at stake is human identity, or rather its cultural construction, an identity perpetually threatened by the introduction of non-meaning. Yet just as

misshapen forms were excluded as low and immoral, their very alterity aligned them with the sacred.

Medieval religious buildings were sites of encounter with the most profound, and perhaps the most important otherness imaginable to contemporaries – the discarnate and timeless world of the divine. Set into the very fabric of the church via architectural sculpture, the characteristic monstrous forms, aggressive beasts and staring heads suggest that the church itself was identified as a liminal site through association, a threshold between physical and supra-physical realities. Thus architectural imagery placed this 'reservoir of folk belief, unofficial mythology, and collective dreams' (Cohen, 1994: 1) at the very heart of cultural life.

In conclusion I suggest:

1) The imagery common to medieval architectural sculpture is liminal in the sense that these carvings represent, through various means (e.g. deformity, monstrosity, excessive life force), a supernatural potency or energy.

2) Such ambiguous imagery is appropriate to sites of heightened spiritual activity because, as Pseudo-Dionysius suggested and folkloric practice articulated, the sacred is itself indefinable. Embedded in the structure of the building, the images henceforth identify, through association, the space of the building as liminal.

3) Liminal space is powerful but also dangerous for it is outside the categories and boundaries that govern law and order, form and meaning. Thus the images also serve an apotropaic function, protecting the users of the building from the dangerous energy of the sacred.

4) Interwoven with this folkloric and traditional use of images, Christianity adds a moral interpretation of the imagery based upon the association of ambiguous figures with the demonic.

Before proceeding to look directly at the images, however, it is crucial that their social context is explored, and it is to this task that the following chapter now turns.

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The Social Life of Medieval Architectural Sculpture

Introduction

The immediate context of architectural images – the stone and woodwork of religious buildings – must be given life by an attempt to understand how people interacted with, perceived, and used these spaces. To this end, it is necessary to explore the development of the imagery and the social role played by the building, not only in its finished form but also during its construction and decoration. Accordingly, this chapter is divided into three main sections, each of which explores various aspects of the subject. First I consider some of the influences upon the subject matter and style of the imagery. This is not the place to offer a critique of the concept of style in art and architecture, which has in any case been discussed elsewhere (see, for example, Gombrich, 1966; Summers, 1982, 1989); certainly, my use of conventional academic terms and stylistic categories is no endorsement that these are appropriate to the material. What they do afford, however, is recognition of a loose "artistic" context or broad working tradition into which medieval architectural sculpture can be situated. The following two parts focus more closely on social context, exploring the use of medieval ecclesiastical buildings and the patrons, sculptors, painters and audiences of the carvings.

Influences and Styles

The development of medieval architectural sculpture must be viewed against two synchronous processes: the development of a recognisably Christian art and architecture in general, and the development and spread of Christianity itself. Initially one cult among many in the Roman Empire, successful conversion involved maintaining a balance between claiming superior spiritual authority and not alienating potential converts. To this end, continuity of tradition and ritual was paramount, and a process of displacement, of incorporating the recognisably pagan into the new body of Christian thought and belief occurred. Both textual and visual sources were involved. For example, the *Physiologus*, the source of later Bestiaries, was written in the second century AD and integrated classical and oriental beliefs about animals and fabulous creatures into its Christian message. Likewise, the various works of Pseudo-Dionysius, influenced profoundly by neo-platonic philosophy, would become an inspiration to influential cathedral builders such as Abbot Suger of St Denis. Neither source would have been considered pagan to medieval Christianity which preserved and perpetuated its influence. Indeed, the classical world was an important reference point throughout the Middle Ages, and provided a path along which a great many other cultural influences – Hellenistic, Near Eastern, Oriental, and Egyptian, for example – could be transmitted into Christian art (Baltrušaitis, 1955).

Contact with northern European cultures, through trade and missionary activity, saw this process of absorbing and transforming pagan into Christian art continue. In this way Germanic and other Northern European styles of carving as well as subject matter entered Christian sculpture, a juxtaposition that was not considered disturbing (Sauerlinder, 1991: 675-6). Reciprocal networks of influence between Christian cultures continued this process (Fernie, 1987). The Norman Conquest, for example, established closer links between England and the continent which allowed the Franco-Norman style of Romanesque architectural sculpture, itself a development of Byzantine and Carolingian traditions (which had themselves been influenced by Spanish, Arabic, and Eastern European styles) to fuse with nascent English

architecture. In a similar manner certain English styles proved influential and crossed the channel to the continent (King, 1986; see also Zarnecki 1951, 1953, 1966).

Classical Architecture and *Spolia*

One major influence upon the form of medieval ecclesiastical buildings was the Roman basilica. Essentially a large meeting hall in which to transact business and discuss public matters, the basilica became the prototype for the form of the Christian church until well into the later Middle Ages (Krautheimer, 1965: 19-20). In choosing a Roman secular building as a template for its architectural presence, Christianity clearly separated itself from classical paganism and temple architecture.

While it was important to establish Christianity as different from paganism, it was equally important to not alienate potential converts. Out of necessity the development of Christian liturgy and imagery drew close parallels with its predecessor in order to displace and relocate pagan associations and accommodation to 'certain elements of pagan culture was common (though not universal) missionary practice in the early Middle Ages' (Kieckhefer, 1989: 44). Classical architectural elements and images were also reused in medieval churches (Heckscher, 1938; Kinney, 1986), likely an attempt to enter pagan art into a different conceptual framework so that its original associations might be subtly altered. Camille has called such a process the 'capacity of Christian art to conquer by assimilation' (1989: 83). Yet the presence of classical images within Christian architecture from its very beginning may well have established a tradition of "pagan" architectural decoration as suitable ecclesiastical imagery. While their original meanings may have been lost or changed, such a scenario would account for the frequent occurrence of images ultimately derived from a pagan source such as mermaids, sirens, centaurs and harpies within medieval architectural sculpture.

Manuscripts

As I have illustrated in chapter 1, textual sources of imagery have often been identified as source material for medieval architectural sculpture; indeed, Mâle credited the rebirth of monumental sculpture in the eleventh century to the influence of manuscript illustrations (1978 [1922]: Ch. 1). Mâle observed that Romanesque art was, like its Anglo-Saxon predecessor, 'above all monastic art'; by this he did not mean that all the artists were monks but that it was almost always monks who dictated the artists' subjects (1978 [1922]: xxx-xxxi). Initially these textual images were copied verbatim; later, a more creative spirit prevailed. For Mâle the eclectic nature of Romanesque art was a direct reflection of the disparate sources and periods from which these manuscripts hailed: the Near East, Hellenistic Greece and Egypt, Byzantium; in terms of date from the Early Christian, Carolingian, Byzantine, and recent medieval periods.

I have already highlighted some of the problems with "sourcing" architectural images in texts and the failure to differentiate between architectural and textual contexts. Some medieval manuscripts, however, do concern themselves with similar imagery and are worth considering, not as direct models, but, as sources for sermons, exempla and stories, more as disseminators of images throughout medieval culture. Fables, romances, travel literature and bestiaries are examples. Classical monster lore was popular among the educated in the late seventh and early eighth centuries in Anglo-Saxon England, and, collected together in manuscripts such as the *Liber Monstrorum*, proved influential upon Germanic writers and their works, for example, the poem *Beowulf* (Herren, 1998: 101-103; Orchard, 1995). Through these works, the marvellous creatures of pagan myth and the "monstrous" races believed to dwell at the limits of the world, originally commented upon and catalogued by classical writers such as Solinus, Ktesias, Megasthenes and Pliny, entered medieval culture. Their images soon became 'stock features of the occidental mentality' and were copied and replicated throughout encyclopedieas, histories and romances as well as Anglo-Saxon and medieval art (Wittkower, 1942: 159; Husband, 1980; Friedman, 1981a, 1986; Hassig, 1999c).

Bestiaries were repositories of classical lore. Ancient sources 'were incorporated into the later medieval bestiaries both directly and indirectly, by way of the animal imagery established in the early *Physiologus* manuscripts as well as in Classical imagery in different media' (Wheatcroft, 1999: 141). This Christianization and dissemination of pagan material not only helps us interpret the presence of pagan creatures in ecclesiastical carvings, but also highlights the often conflicting interpretations of certain animals. The same creature

> might well represent both good and evil, Christ or the devil, in different texts from the Bible. Confusion often ensued, and the writer was reduced to attributing two meanings to the same beast, one good and one evil, with several shades of probable meaning between the two extremes as well (Barber, 1992: 8).

To confuse matters further, classical lore itself often supplied ambiguous interpretations, nurturing both positive as well as negative ideas about snakes, for example (Wheatcroft, 1999: 143-148). Bestiary stories and images entered vernacular life indirectly, through 'a multitude of sources, some textual, some visual, some word of mouth' (Hassig, 1999a: xi). Sermons were instrumental in their dissemination (Owst, 1933, 1934; Baxter, 1988: 209).

Oriental Textiles

Other common Romanesque motifs such as the Tree of Life, affronted animals and bicorporate animals may all be found with regularity among the decorative patterns of Hellenistic, Syrian and Byzantine art, and further back in time, Sumerian art (Mâle, 1978 [1922], Ch. 2; Frankfort, 1954). The Asiatic East has also been credited as a potential source for much early Christian decoration (e.g. Strzygowski, 1923; 1928). The transmission of such designs has been attributed to their common appearance on Eastern textiles which were greatly revered in the medieval West. Imported

Islamic textiles, for example, were used regularly to veil images or to make luxurious ecclesiastical robes, the 'beauty of the pattern' apparently carrying greater importance than the design which 'was, at times, quite unsuited for the purpose' (Ettinghausen, 1975: 16). Despite the likelihood that these designs were given Christian interpretations their presence attests to the incorporation of eastern and non-Christian images into the art of the medieval west. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Islamic textile patterns were taken over by European weavers who used them freely.

Plant Scroll and Animal Ornament

In a similar manner, plant scroll entered the Christian canon. A motif common to the Eastern Mediterranean it was brought to these shores with Christianity and is often said to represent Christ's statement recorded in the Book of John (XV, 1) as 'I am the [true] vine' (Bailey, 1996: 52-6). However, this symbolism is difficult to prove and does not 'help us to explain why on Irish and Scottish sculptures it is as rare as it is frequent on English carvings' (Kitzinger, 1936: 62). By the eighth century the plant-scroll had become a standard motif of stone carving in England (Wilson, 1984: 64).

Two main varieties of scroll are discernible. The first is a plain plant-scroll, often heavy with fruit or, as a tree, carved in a symmetrical pattern. The second is the inhabited scroll in which birds, animals, monsters and figures are represented among the foliage. This latter form is important to the development of architectural sculpture for two reasons. First, it combines with Germanic zoomorphic art to create interlaced vegetal animal bodies. Here the animal form dissolves into the twisting stems of the foliage. In the south of England a good example can be found on the tympanum at the church of St Margaret at Knook (Wiltshire) where the rear leg of one of the two confronted animals turns into a scrolling plant stem (Taylor, 1968).

Second, by the late eighth century foliate animals develop. These occur as motifs distinct from the plant scroll but with vegetal tails or bodies as illustrated by the

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examples at St Mary's, Selham (Sussex) where a capital on the south side of the chancel arch displays two serpents, one of which sprouts foliage from its tail (Taylor and Taylor, 1966: 42-43).

Zoomorphic decoration was a characteristic feature of the art of the Germanic tribes and in this country it remained 'a more significant element in the art resulting from the conversion than it did in other parts of Christian Europe' (Hicks, 1993: 5). The Germanic styles had developed along the northern borders of the Roman Empire towards the end of the fourth century. Characterised by abstraction of form and ornamental repetition this zoomorphic art has been classified into two main styles, one turning the animal into a mosaic of separate bits and pieces, the other stressing the linear form and making a ribbon-like, frequently interlacing pattern (*ibid.* 11-12). The latter bears the most importance here for interlaced, elongated animal bodies are an essential element of Anglo-Saxon representation and may be found in many early medieval church sculptures (e.g. Monkwearmouth, County Durham; see Taylor and Taylor, 1965: 437). In certain instances these interlaced animal forms may have had an apotropaic significance (Kitzinger, 1993: 3-6; Speake, 1980: 77). In the Anglo-Scandinavian period zoomorphic art began to combine both Viking and Anglo-Saxon styles and zoomorphic forms developed in Scandinavia began to be translated into the 'decorative vocabulary of stone sculpture' (Bailey, 1996: 84; Blindheim, 1965). These entered Romanesque art.

Ringerike and Urnes Styles

Important contributions to the later Romanesque in the south of England are made by the Ringerike and Urnes styles, both of which developed during the first half of the eleventh century. In the Ringerike the semi-naturalistic animals, bird and scrollwork motifs common to tenth-century Scandinavian art are not only given new shapes but fuse, producing beasts with characteristic stem-like projections that terminate in stubby spirals (Clapham, 1930: 134). The Urnes style overlaps with and gradually incorporates the Ringerike (Fuglesang, 1978: 207). Animals become

increasingly ribbon-shaped, and the 'interpenetrating multi-loops and figures-of-eight' made possible by serpentine forms dominate the designs (*ibid.* 1986: 228). The spirited beast carved upon a grave slab from St Paul's Churchyard, London, exemplifies the Ringerike style (Bailey, 1996: 96), while twelfth-century capitals at Romsey Abbey (Hampshire) testify to the integration of both Ringerike and Urnes into the English Romanesque. Both styles influenced and contributed to the development of continental Romanesque as well (Baylé, 1991: 48).

Gothic

Gothic architecture first emerged as a coherent style in Western Europe toward the end of the first half of the twelfth century. The Cathedral of Sens (1130-1162) and the Abbey Church of Saint-Denis (c. 1130-40 and 1140-44) are the two 'preeminent examples of this early stage of development' (Grodecki, 1978: 23). Defining Gothic architectural elements such as the pointed arch, flying buttress and ribbed vault initially began to appear within and upon buildings that were essentially Romanesque in character and in England this period is known as Transitional and predates Early English Gothic (early thirteenth century). Examples form the Wessex region of this shift include the south door of the Church of St. Mary the Virgin in Devizes (Wiltshire) where an otherwise typical Romanesque arch has been built with a point, and the east window of the church at Lydiard Tregoze (Wiltshire) where a central pointed arch is flanked by two rounded ones. Like the Romanesque the Gothic grew out of both western and Oriental ideas and styles, the pointed arch, for example, first widely used in Sassanid and then Islamic art, becoming a key feature in the latter from the seventh century on (*ibid.* 1978: 23).

The centuries during which the Gothic style predominated in art and architecture were ones of profound religious and social change. A number of writers note the beginnings of a substantial shift in attitudes towards and perceptions of the world during the thirteenth century (for example Jolly, 1996: 168; Williams, 1996: 57; Bailey, 2001: 964). The rise of logical thought, the influence of the scholastic movement, and

the development of universities increasingly displaced the more integrated, holistic, and mystical vision of life that had formed the context in which Romanesque art had developed. Scholarly activity tended to rationalize the wondrous into contemporary understandings of the natural order (Bynum, 1997: 10). Natural and supernatural means 'were gradually separated from one another and evaluated according to different rationalities, human reason and spiritual insight' (Jolly, 1996: 168).

Religious buildings likewise transform. Space within the parish church becomes contested by different social groups (Graves, 1989). Wealthy lay patrons lavish money on 'long term mortuary provisions' designed to display their wealth which, in doing so, kept their memory alive (Duffy, 1992: 328). Collective groups such as guilds also financed building projects within the space of the parish church and commemorated their deeds with heraldic shields and other insignia. Clerical space becomes increasingly segregated, elaborate screens serving to increase the mystery of the priesthood by emphasizing the distinction between nave and chancel (Bond, 1908; Platt, 1981: 135).

The Social Life of Medieval Religious Buildings

Certainly, medieval religious buildings were embedded in complex social relationships. Their layout and use, especially at the level of the parish church, developed as much as a result of social action as of liturgical practice, something often overlooked when relying solely upon textual evidence written by clerics (Graves, 1989: 302; Davies, 1968: 95; Camille, 1994b: 372). Yet just as it is necessary to read the text to which Gothic marginal images were anchored and 'know something of the context in which the manuscript was used' in order to understand its imagery (Camille, 1993b: 1), so it is crucial to foreground the context in which the building was used if we are to understand its sculpture.

Perceptions and Use of Space

As public buildings, the spaces articulated by churches were not uncontested. In the later Middle Ages for example it became increasingly common for patrons to be commemorated in stained glass, heraldic roof bosses, or the name of a chapel, thereby associating themselves with the very fabric of the church. The division between laity and clergy, however, may be considered to have run deeper than most secular inequality, and was itself emphasized by the custom relating to the upkeep of nave and chancel. This granted responsibility for the nave to the parishioners, and responsibility for the chancel to the rector, vicar or overall patron (Bettey, 1987: 61). Such division of duty became commonplace by the fourteenth century (see Hoey, 1995: 69, n22) and 'gave an apparent justification to the idea that the former could be the scene of non-liturgical activities as long as the latter was preserved inviolate' (Davies, 1968: 39). Indeed,

> the medieval villager would never have conceived of his church as set apart for the exclusive service and worship of God, a place into which secular activities should never intrude; where only the purest thoughts might be expressed in word or deed. That view of the church as a place far removed from the coarseness, the obscenities and the commercialism of daily life was a post-Reformation – specifically a Victorian – innovation. The villager drew no clear distinction, whatever the learned might think, between the spiritual and the otherworldly on the one hand, and the material life of the peasant on the other (Pounds, 2000: 340).

Certainly churches were rarely empty. In those that possessed shrines renowned for their healing powers people commonly slept overnight and often experienced cures for their ailments (see for examples Davies, 1968: 41). In this respect the difference between medieval hospital and medieval church blurred. Additionally, churches commonly provided a space in which to buy and sell goods. That ecclesiastical authorities regularly condemned the markets set up in churches and churchyards throughout the Middle Ages testifies to how widespread the practice must have been.

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At Salisbury 'a horse-fair was held not only in the precincts but in the cathedral itself' while 'at St Audrey's Fair booths were erected in Ely Cathedral for sale of laces made of silk' (*ibid.* 56). Not only did the laity see little amiss in this buying and selling, they also found it a source of income for their churches – pedlars were often charged for the right to sell their goods on church ground.

Opportunities for eating and drinking in the church and churchyard were plenty and embedded in community life via the church ale. Essentially parish feasts held with the object of making money, these ales often took place in the nave, which, unencumbered by pews until the latter part of the medieval period, allowed for the erection of long trestle tables. Entertainers and musicians, the traditional accompaniment to a medieval feast gathering, were often present too, as churchwardens accounts attest (Stooks, 1905: 13; Cox, 1913: 205)

Dancing probably took place at church ales, but it also featured as part of clerical rituals too. Dances were a common feature of medieval ritual, only regarded with suspicion by ecclesiastical authorities when they were engaged in by the laity, and not by the clergy alone (Horowitz, 1989). Yet despite the desire of the higher clergy to stamp out dancing, the cathedral canons and village priests 'were prepared to tolerate it, either in order to control it or to engage in it wholeheartedly regardless of episcopal opinion' (Davies, 1968: 55).

That medieval ritual provided the clergy with opportunities for carnivalesque excess is most notable in the Feast of Fools. Performed annually, the feast was originally spread over several days from the end of December to the beginning of January and is recorded mainly in France, sporadically in Germany and Bohemia, and in some parts of England, especially at Lincoln and Beverley. Performed 'in a mood of almost unlicensed revelry' the ruling idea of the feast 'was the inversion of status and the burlesque performance by the inferior clergy of functions proper to the higher grades' (*ibid.* 81, 53). Despite continual attack from ecclesiastical authorities throughout the medieval period, the Feast of Fools persisted until the fourteenth century in England and the sixteenth century in France (Billington, 1984: 1).

Repeated attempts to ban the feast mean that vivid records of what was involved have survived, as the following extract from a mid-fifteenth-century letter to the bishops and to the deans of the chapters of France demonstrates:

> Priests and clerks may be seen wearing masks and monstrous visages at the hours of the offices. They dance in the choir dressed as women, panders or minstrels. They sing wanton songs. They eat black pudding at the horns of the altar while the celebrant is saying mass. They play at dice there....They run and leap through the church (cited in Davies, 1968: 53).

The wearing of masks by the clergy was banned in 1300, suggesting that it had been common practice, but was increasingly regarded as dangerous (Pritchard, 1967: 72-3). This fits with the evidence that suggests a greater fear in the later medieval period of crossing the boundaries perceived to separate humans from animals (Salisbury, 1994: 139).

Clearly, medieval culture favoured ambiguity and

> the interpenetration of ludic and sacred space was common. This occurred not only on the feast of fools and in the boy bishop festivities ... but also in liturgically controlled rites like Rogation days and even the new feast of Corpus Christi, which admitted elements of popular ritual into its performance (Camille, 1998a: 263).

Games were popular. Most of these had a liturgical or quasi-liturgical setting; others were 'entirely and unashamedly secular' (Davies, 1968: 81). Games associated with the liturgy took place mainly in connection with the Feast of Fools, although other occasions such as Lent provided opportunities (*ibid.* 82). In monastic settings, ball games often took place in the space provided by the cloister, tennis, for example, played using the angles of the roofs (Strutt, 1801: 89). Occasionally, things got out of hand. In 1338 the chapter of Wells Cathedral had to stop various May games being performed in the cloisters because of damage being done to their property (Camille,

1998a: 263) and the later medieval period saw Church authorities increasingly hostile to such activities. During the fourteenth century Bishop Baldock of London censured 'games, dances, wrestlings and other sports meetings at Barking in the parish church and in the church of the nunnery'. A successor, Bishop Braybrooke (1382-1404), attacked the clergy of St Paul's for playing 'at ball and other unseemly games, both within and without the church' (Davies, 1968: 84). Nevertheless, some clerics realised that such customary activities could be beneficial. In 1220 Thomas of Chobham wrote:

> It is well known that until now there has been the perverse custom in many places, where on any holy feast day wanton women and youthful fools gather together and sing wanton and diabolical songs the whole night through in the churchyards and in the church to which they lead their ring dances and practise many other shameful games. All such activity is to be prohibited with the greatest diligence, if it is possible. However, it is to be encouraged in many places for many men would not otherwise come to such feasts if they could not play games (cited in Billington, 1984: 2).

Clearly, medieval religious spaces were used and perceived in ways at odds with contemporary notions of religiosity, and rarely conform to 'the neat categories ritual-secular constructed by archaeologists' (Brück, 1999: 316) and others. Except when they were isolated for reasons of defence, churches were located in the centres of towns and villages, closely related to the surrounding houses, monuments to an integrated outlook in which sacred and secular were not rigidly differentiated.

Symbolism and Folklore

Although social forces acted upon the fabric and general use of the church, the mass provided the template for its order. Within this cosmological space certain directions

and areas had symbolic significance and folklore connected to the church building often drew upon these associations.

Nineteenth-century scholarship was concerned with explaining all the parts of medieval religious buildings via profound Christian symbolism, a tradition that dated back to the time of the Early Church. In the thirteenth century systematic glossaries were compiled on the subject. The French churchman William Durand (1230-1296), for example, went into profound depth concerning the symbolic character of the material form of the building, devoting attention to the spiritual significance of the constituents of the cement, as well comparing the piers of the church to the bishops and doctors 'who specially sustain the Church of God by their doctrine' (Frisch, 1987: 35, 37). Theological symbolism of such an extraordinary degree, although it may have concerned many of the higher clergy, was unlikely to have been foremost among the preoccupations of the average parish priest, however, who was typically 'inadequately trained in the lore of the church' (Young, 1936: 231).

Yet by the later Middle Ages a symbolically loaded spatial arrangement within the church had crystallized, itself maintained and perpetuated through the collective ritual of the mass. As studies of memory have shown (e.g. Yates, 1966; Carruthers, 1990), repeated movement through architectural spaces, real or imaginary, can provide successful means of memorizing sequential information. Through repetitive action an authoritative template or dominant symbolism is generated which not only informs the positioning of bodies according to their social status (e.g. cleric/lay) but also the position of imagery. In this way 'the mass acted as the medium by which a whole cosmology was revealed' (Graves, 1989: 309).

This not only affected the orientation of oneself within the building but the orientation of the building itself. Alignment toward the east was a liturgical priority and frequently achieved despite various restrictions (Hoare and Sweet, 2000; Cave, 1950). To the east lay the spiritual heartland of Christian Europe, and it was at the easternmost, most enclosed and inaccessible point of the church that the altar – the focus of the mystery of the mass, and thus the redemption of humankind – was

located. Spatial orientation was an important part of medieval life (Le Goff, 1988: 91), and in the separation of chancel from nave not only were the different functions of each area established but social hierarchies reinforced.

At the same time as the church building articulated social space, so it established and perpetuated a cosmological framework. Painten Cowen, in discussing some of the iconographic programmes of the early cathedrals around Paris, notes that the predominant imagery in rose windows that face north is the Virgin Mary surrounded by priests, prophets and kings of the Old Testament, while in the windows that face south Christ is nearly always portrayed in Glory after the Resurrection (1979: 82). The association of women and feminine religious symbolism with the northern parts of churches finds expression in the architecture of medieval nunneries, whose cloisters were, unusually, often located on the north side of the church (Gilchrist, 1994b: 128-149). This disposition of north and south infuses the space between with the mystery of the Crucifixion, located architecturally by the dying Christ carved into every rood screen and celebrated in the office of the mass. However, such identification of Old and New Testaments with the north and south sides of the church could colour interpretations: 'Thus the north was associated with evil, darkness, the Jews and the Crucifixion; whereas the south was associated with good, light, the apostles and the Resurrection' (Graves, 1989: 309). Into this symbolic terrain were integrated wider, perhaps folkloric, associations, for example those that connect the north door with the devil (Valiente, 1973: 250-251).[1] Although images may not have supported such a cosmology in every building, ritual activity probably did, and in this way a "religious geography" was perpetuated. We might speculate to what extent such a conceptual framework influenced the visionary experiences of medieval men and women. The Vision of Thurkill, for example, is detailed enough to allow the construction of a map of the otherworld (see Bartlett, 2000: 606, fig. 15). Positioned on the north side of the Church of Mary are the mouth of hell, the

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[1] See also 'Devil's Doors' in the Sussex Archaeology and Folklore website at www2.prestel.co.uk/aspen/sussex/devil.

Infernal Theatre, and Satan, whilst proceeding eastwards the soul passes through purgatorial fire and water, until a bridge conducts it to the Mount of Joy (purified souls are located on the south side, purified but suffering souls cluster on the north). Finally, the soul enters the Church of Gold (the easternmost point) through a jewelled gate.

The Social Life of Medieval Architectural Sculpture

If the physical space ordered and revealed by the architecture of the church consequently merged secular and symbolic realities, seasonal and liturgical time, then as fundamental parts of the building architectural sculpture is likely to have shared the associations carried by its different areas. Against this background it is necessary to consider the influences upon and motivations of patrons as well as the potential audiences of the carvings.

Patrons

Medieval architectural sculpture is notoriously difficult to assess in terms of patronage. There are few specific references directly to the architectural decoration and as such, the identification of sculptural patronage means in most cases identifying the patron of the building work in general. However, even when a patron can be identified it is unclear how patronage actually worked, and just how much input into the building and its decoration was the impetus of the patron or the result of the masons and the traditions of carving within which they worked. Thus the identification of patrons does not solve any problems over what relationship the patron had with the building process. Moreover, while it is often possible to sketch out the political motivations of patrons, which in some cases can be extraordinarily illuminating (e.g. Hunt, 2002), more spiritual desires are often overlooked (although Ron Baxter (2002) has illustrated the close intertwining of both in the example of

Henry I and Reading Abbey). Patrons were not, however, ambivalent about the presence or absence of architectural sculpture and certainly the common assumption that such carvings were of little consequence is unfounded: these were desirable images, status symbols even. By the later medieval period such imagery could be considered the 'very height of fashion', appearing 'not only on major ecclesiastical and secular buildings but in all media from embroidered albs for Westminster Abbey to a gilded cup owned by Edward III' (Camille, 1998a: 237).

Although documentary or other written sources with direct bearing upon architectural carving are rare, where documents do record the building or extension of an aisle or other feature it is fair to assume that any in situ carvings were funded by the patron of that building work. At Steeple Ashton in Wiltshire, for example, an inscription on a brass tablet at the west end of the church (originally written on a painted board) records the patrons of the late medieval rebuilding (1480-1500). The north aisle was built 'at the Cost and Charge of Robert Long, and Edith his Wife' while the south aisle 'for the most part was Built at the Cost and Charge of Walter Leucas, and Maud his Wife. The Rest of the Church with the Steeple was Built at the Cost and Charge of the Parishioners then living'. Such piecemeal patronage, in which a family might take it upon themselves to fund one part of a church is often seen in the establishing of chantry chapels. The fourteenth-century Bettesthorne chapel on the south side of the chancel at Mere (Wiltshire) and the mid-sixteenth-century Sharrington chapel on the north side of the chancel at St Cyriac's, Lacock (Wiltshire) are good examples. In both cases it is likely that all aspects of the building work necessary to create these new spaces, including architectural sculpture, were funded by the patron. Indeed, in some cases the ornate carving on the exterior provides a dramatic contrast to the rest of the church, thus marking it out, as for example the chapel on the south side of the chancel at St John's, Devizes (Wiltshire). In all these cases monstrous gargoyles and grotesques are prominent. As Camille comments with regard to the figures in the margins of the Luttrell Psalter, these images could hardly have appeared as tasteless to their patron, Geoffrey Luttrell, 'who had this lavish book illuminated at great expense as a symbol of his status and power' (*ibid.* 234-5).

So it must have been for the wealthy merchants and aristocratic families who financed building work.

Patrons might be identified via other means. At some sites the presence of heraldic devices in the sculpture or painting serve to valorize a particular family, often recording their financial aid. Among the roof bosses in the chancel at All Saints, North Street, York, may be found the coat of arms of the family of Gilliot to which the rector responsible for the construction of the roof belonged (Woodcock, 1996: 73). It is interesting that such an ecclesiastical patron, and one familiar with the building through working there, was comfortable placing his heraldic shield among images that are today popularly considered "pagan" – mouth-pulling heads, leonine and human foliage disgorgers, a griffin – as well as angelic musicians. This example strengthens the case for architectural sculpture being a valid part of medieval building traditions and not something done in the absence of clerical supervision. The lack of similar bosses in the nave suggests that the patron's responsibilities in this case were limited to the chancel area. By the fourteenth century such a division of responsibility (in which parishioners maintained the nave and patrons the chancel) became increasingly common and often led to striking differences in appearance between the two parts of the building (Hoey, 1995: 69, n22).

Yet the majority of parish churches had few or no wealthy benefactors, and 'depended entirely on the efforts of the whole body of parishioners for any extensions or additions to the fabric or for the commissioning of carvings' (Bettey and Taylor, 1982: 8). Churchwardens' accounts, wills and other documentary material provide crucial evidence here. The accounts for Yatton (Somerset) show that the entire parish raised money for the church which was spent on the purchase of images for the rood screen, stone and lime, the payment of masons and carvers, and for the building of a parapet around the roof of the church with numerous figures carved upon it (*ibid.*). In this example, which is probably by no means unusual, the entire community financed the architectural images which suggests that they were deemed worthwhile, substantiating the idea that they were prestigious. Certainly, rivalry between neighbouring congregations could and did find expression

in the commissioning of sculpture as a contract of 1498 between the parishioners of St James in Bristol and two carvers for a new reredos specifies: the carving was to be 'as good as or better than the reredos at the nearby Bristol church of St Stephen' (*ibid.* 9). In some cases patrons had the final say. When the sculptor Tideman 'made a non-traditional Christ for a London church in 1306, the bishop had it removed and demanded that the sculptor return his fee' (Link, 1995: 35).

Sculptors

If little is known about their patrons, then there is even less to be gleaned about those who produced the carvings. 'Chance references in contracts and rolls have preserved the names of a few of the masons and carvers, but beyond this, information about the men themselves is very difficult to find' (Bettey and Taylor, 1982: 10).

In the early medieval and Romanesque period stone carving 'was not a separate function but was merely one of the mason's tasks, since carvings were generally an integral part of the building on which they were employed' (*ibid.*). It is likely that most architectural sculpture was produced in this way throughout the Middle Ages, masons being engaged in both general construction as well as carving, as the Dunster contract suggests (see below). Although 'it is difficult to isolate the moment at which sculptors emerged as specialists' (Coldstream, 1991: 63), throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries carvers began to organize themselves into groups, operating directly at the quarry or at a lodge located at the construction site itself. At Ham Hill, for example, masons and carvers 'produced the standardised pillars and capitals, windows and doors of Ham stone which are to be found over wide areas of south Somerset and west Dorset' (Bettey and Taylor, 1982: 10). Frequently, carvers were journeymen travelling from site to site for work and distinct groups have been identified on the basis of carving styles, as for example the 'Sarum-Lullington' band responsible for much of the imagery at both these sites as well as others in the area (Stalley, 1971: 80; see also Brakspear, 1931). By the end of the medieval period it is

possible that the majority of architectural components as well as free-standing statues were carved at off-site workshops rather than at the churches for which they were intended (Wright, 1982: 3-4).

Contracts suggest that 'considerable latitude was allowed to the carver as to the subject-matter and style of many of the minor carvings or as to the details of carved work on capitals mouldings, the bases for statues and much exterior work' (Bettey and Taylor, 1982: 11). Although a handful of the contracts that survive from the Middle Ages are relatively specific with regard to details, by far the majority are unclear. That drawn up in 1442 between the churchwardens and parishioners of Dunster with John Marys from nearby Stogursey for building a central tower to their parish church is a fine example. Although it is specified that 'the sayde Jon Maryce schall make iij gargyllys in thre corners of the sayde towre' (the fourth corner being occupied by a stair turret), there is no mention of the form that the gargoyles should take (Lyte, 1881: 217). Rather, 'it must have been left to the inventive imagination of John Marys what hideous monsters or fearful demons he chose to carve as decorative finishes to the water spouts' (Bettey and Taylor, 1982: 12). In a further example, the master mason William de Helpeston, under contract to build twelve chapels at the east end of the church at Vale Royal Abbey in Cheshire, is granted a 'free hand over the details' (Salzmann, 1952: 439). The nature of the relationship between the masons and the patron of the work, and in particular the extent to which their decorative designs were regulated, is unclear (Gameson, 1992: 44).

Whereas high status patrons, such as Bishop Roger of Salisbury (1102-1139), could employ a labour force of considerable size (Stalley, 1971: 80-81), at parish level building teams would have been considerably smaller. The Dunster contract states that if any of the stones were so large that John Marys and his two or three workmen could not lift them, then the parishioners were to provide additional muscle-power (Lyte, 1881: 217; Bettey and Taylor, 1982: 12). Wright suggests that the building team at parochial level would 'probably have been made up of six to eight men under the control of a master mason who was the architect. It would have consisted of hand-

picked men with specialist experience in the skills required in church building, and it is likely to have included trainees or apprentices learning these skills' (1982: 2).

Major sculptural schemes such as those at the great cathedrals and abbeys or specialised work such as roof bosses aside, it must be assumed that many of the smaller carvings and carved decorations on the parish churches were done by masons like John Marys of Stogursey, men 'who were not specialists and who combined carving and building work on churches with a variety of other work on secular buildings' (Bettey and Taylor, 1982: 13).

Painters

Today we are used to encountering relatively colourless interiors upon visiting a medieval church, but this would not have been the case in medieval times. Paint and gilding were ubiquitous. Walls often featured figures such as St Christopher, as at Oaksey (Wiltshire) or Poughill (Cornwall) where the recoloured image helps to give some idea of the effect a medieval church interior might have had (Fig. 3. 1).

The carving and setting of images in place was not, in most cases, the final stage of their production. Often as much money was spent on their painting as it was on their carving (Bettey and Taylor, 1982: 13). Throughout the Middle Ages there existed a close relationship between sculpture and painting, and indeed, for much of the period, it is probably misleading to think of the two as separate activities. Not only is there 'strong evidence to support the presumption that carving was usually, if not almost invariably, painted', but painting and sculpture were likely to have been integrated as part of the overall design (Tristram, 1944: 65). Certainly, until the specialization of the later medieval period 'it is by no means impossible ... that the painter and sculptor were in fact one and the same craftsman' (*ibid.*).

It is impossible to tell how much painted context the modern observer of architectural sculpture is missing. Capitals or corbels may well have been brightly

Figure 3. 1 The restored painting on the wall of the north nave aisle at Poughill in Cornwall. Images such as this would have been a common sight in many medieval churches throughout the country.

coloured, or painted with designs, as the capital and column shaft from the Priory of St Nicholas, Exeter (Devon) suggests (*ibid.*, pl. 90). These may have been integrated into a larger scheme of imagery. At East Wellow (Hampshire) the east window is painted with heads and rosettes on the inner arch and remains of subjects on the splays, while the crowned corbel heads are tinted with the same pigments (Tristram, 1950: 384). The crypt at Canterbury Cathedral (Kent), famous for its Romanesque capitals, is likely to have been painted extensively, as the fragment in the Gabriel chapel attests. Indeed, it is important to bear in mind that 'striking though the motifs they bear are, the carved capitals at Canterbury are in fact but a minor element in the visual articulation of the crypt as a whole' (Gameson, 1992: 46), forming part of an overall scheme together with carved and painted columns and painted vaults and walls. At the church of St Andrew, South Tawton (Devon), the plasterwork between the wooden ribs supporting the roof was probably once painted, as the church warden's account for 1557 records the removal of 'the pycters on the rowffe of the Churche' (Church leaflet, no date or page number). If this were the case then the unpainted roof bosses would have been thrown into bold relief, and their presently dark and inaccessible images may have been more easily viewed.

This brings us to the use of colour to aid visibility. I have already drawn attention to one of the key problems in studies of medieval architectural sculpture – that it is frequently sited in parts of the building that are distant from the observer and therefore making it difficult to see (chapter 1). However, it is possible that this is an entirely modern phenomenon:

> A number of bosses in the museum at Hayles Abbey show gold and bright colour, and in connexion with these it may be observed that, when gilt and coloured, sculpture becomes more readable at a distance. That this practical aspect was taken into account by the sculptor, is evident from the fact that on heads in bosses, set high in vaulting and thus far removed from the spectator, eyebrows, eyes, and mouth were sometimes enforced or defined with dark lines. The use of an expensive item such as gold, too, in such remote positions, may be explained for the reason that gold, as possessing an

exceptional power of reflecting light, illuminates dark places and throws into
relief what would otherwise be vague and obscure forms (Tristram, 1950:
384).

As a counterpoint, the subjects on the gilded bosses throughout St Mary Redcliffe,
Bristol, are exceptionally difficult to perceive. This, however, appears to be more a
result of the application of gilding over the entire boss thereby rendering
inconspicuous any differences in texture and shape, rather than as a result of their
height from the ground.

Finally, although the 'only definite instance of exterior painting of twelfth-century
date that may be cited as having existed in this country, is that at Winchfield
(Hampshire), where a dragon or salamander is recorded to have been depicted on the
exterior of the tower' (*ibid.* 1944: 68) it may have also been common practice to paint
the exterior of religious buildings.

Clearly, medieval architectural sculpture in many cases would not have been the plain
carving that we see today, nor would its immediate surroundings have been
whitewashed. To what extent sculpture and painted imagery were integrated it is
impossible to assess; that they were, however, is likely.

Audiences

In considering the audiences of architectural sculpture it is necessary to assess the
visual accessibility of the carvings. Potential restrictions include lack of light, the
location of the image out of the range of natural eyesight, and squints and screens.
Other visual media may have served an accentuating role, such as paint. Many images
were likely to have been viewed by select audiences due to their placement in parts of
the church that were restricted to clerics. But it is also important to bear in mind that
many of these images may not have been intended for view by a human audience,

but were part of the battery of apotropaic devices employed by the church to protect the building and its users from malevolent spirits.

Each structural component has a specific role and as such, a specific location. Capitals appear supporting the arches of doorways, arcades, blind arcades, and crossings. Corbels can appear projecting into interiors or protruding from exteriors wherever a wall meets the edge of a roof. Gargoyles and grotesques occur on the exterior of buildings only: the former, in their function of throwing rainwater clear of the building tend to occur in similar locations to corbels; the latter having no functional aspect tend towards greater freedom with respect to location. The tendency, however, is to mimic the location of gargoyles, and often the two occur in sequences together with little to tell them apart. Misericords are perhaps the most restricted in terms of visual access of all of the carved material, not only located in an area of the building from which the laity were excluded, but, whilst in use, obscured by the bodies of the officiating clergy. Roof bosses can occur throughout the interior of the building, although their height, the lack of light, and the clarity of the carving itself often makes them impossible to decipher without the aid of artificial lenses.

Ritual activity involved processions around and through both church and churchyard, potentially exposing the images on the exterior to all. Those concentrated around doorways, however, would have been more frequently viewed and were probably easily seen in daylight.

Conclusion

Almost constantly occupied or used, medieval religious buildings sat at the centre of a complex network of social relations at the same time as they ordered and gave visual expression to Christian mythology. Ritual use of the building provided a template for experiencing the divine in a very physical sense, as participants in the drama of the mass, procession or mystery play. At the same time the space provided

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by the church hosted parish feasts, ales, music and dancing. Architectural sculpture must be viewed within this vibrant context as part of the social life of the building in all its guises.

It is now possible, having situated medieval architectural sculpture within various contexts, to move on to look at the imagery in more detail. The wealth and range of the sculpture has necessitated an approach which focuses on certain aspects of the subject matter. Thus the following section explores the imagery of the head and related themes; Section III then turns to look at examples of complete figures.

Section II: Heads

The Severed Head and the Evil Eye

Introduction

Carvings of heads are ubiquitous in medieval sculpture. As well as a basic template, the repertoire encompasses 'skulls, stylised faces, masks and other representations where the head or face is given an importance far greater than the rest of the body' (Billingsley, 1998: 5). In this chapter I provide a general introduction to the carved head throughout medieval religious buildings, concentrating on location and apotropaic potential. Chapters 5 and 6 then turn to look at specific themes common to the image and related figures in the region.

Locations of the Carved Head in Medieval Architectural Sculpture

Roofline Images

One of the most favourable locations for carved heads, and indeed, architectural imagery on medieval religious buildings in general, is the space where an external wall meets the edge of the roof. Medieval carvings placed in such a roofline location include corbel-tables, cornices, friezes, gargoyles and grotesques.

Romanesque Corbel-tables

A corbel is a block of stone which projects from a wall, originally to take the weight of an architectural feature above, commonly but not always the beams that support the roof (Armi, 2000). Corbels rarely occur on their own but as part of a series, known as a corbel-table, typically found tucked beneath the eaves of churches and cathedrals or on the interior of medieval religious buildings beneath roof beams. Often, however, any weight-distributing function is secondary to a decorative one as corbels are frequently carved. Stryzygowski suggests that they developed from a possible tradition of carving the exposed beam-ends of wooden structures that were later imitated in stone (1928: 7-8).

Corbel-tables may display a diverse range of carved figures or follow a simple, frequently repeated template (usually the head), commonly interspersed with plain corbels or corbels carved with geometric designs. In the south of England examples of the former include the south transept at Winchester Cathedral (Hampshire), the chancel, transeptal apses and north nave aisle at Romsey Abbey (Hampshire), the nave at Studland (Dorset), and the north side of the chancel at St John, Devizes (Wiltshire). Examples of the latter exist on the south side of the nave at Priston (Somerset), the tower at Milford-on-Sea (Hampshire), the interior of the nave at Maiden Newton (Dorset), and the exterior of the chancels at Stoke-sub-Hamdon (Somerset) and St Mary, Devizes (Wiltshire).

The most common subjects carved on Romanesque corbel-tables in the region are heads (Fig. A2. 1). Single human, animal, or composite human/animal heads predominate. None of the sites in the sample lack corbels carved with a single head of some sort, although other images – paired heads, basic geometric motifs such as chevrons and cylinders, and human or animal figures – may be absent. At Priston and Maiden Newton, for example, there is no image other than the head. Thus, for this region at least, the single head appears to be the most basic element in a carved corbel-table.

Despite their ubiquity, these carved heads are rarely identical. Winchester Cathedral, for example, possesses a diverse range of early-twelfth-century carved corbels on both north and south transepts. This site is likely to have had some impact on the surrounding region and possibly provided models for later carvers to work from. One image in particular – the pair of human heads angled so that each looks away from each other by about ninety degrees – may be found elsewhere. The distinctive feature of the pair is their headgear, represented as a grooved and peaked cap, each cap joined together at the back of the head. Corbels carved with this design appear on the north transept of Winchester Cathedral and the corbel-table surrounding the chancel at Romsey, where it is used as a template for a number of carvings (Fig. 4. 1).

Indeed, numerous variations upon the severed head motif exist, particularly at the larger sites (Figs A2. 2, A2. 3). Beast heads are those carvings that are impossible to identify as any particular species of animal with certainty. These tend to be formulaic, typically combining or drawing upon equine and feline characteristics to produce a head composed of a snout, pointed ears, oval eyes and often an open mouth lined with teeth. The beast head template allows endless variation, as the examples at Romsey Abbey testify (Fig. 4. 2). Alternatively it can appear in a series as the most simple, repetitive image, as the series on the south side of the chancel at St John's, Devizes, illustrates (Fig. 4. 3). In many carvings, however, emphasis is placed upon the mouth which can appear of exaggerated size, lined with sharp teeth, engulfing human heads, figures or animals and sometimes pulled open by a tiny pair of forelimbs. Also included in the category "beast" are those carvings that represent recognisable animals such as the boar, bear, horse and ape, all of which feature in the corbel-tables in the region, although to a lesser degree than the generic beast heads.

The representation of human heads varies from a relatively basic staring head without any facial expression whatsoever to the more elaborate grimacing or contorted heads. Some of the best examples of the latter may be found among the carved corbels on the south transept at Winchester Cathedral. These heads are intricately carved, but are not so detailed that they prove obscure to an observer on the ground (Fig. 4. 4). A succession of grimacing and smiling heads also stare out
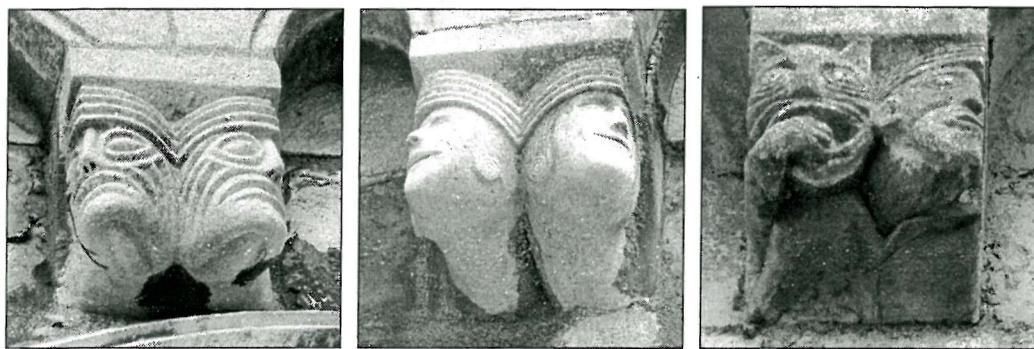
Figure 4. 1 Examples of double-headed corbels from the corbel-table at Romsey Abbey. Variations upon this theme proliferate among the sculptures at this site.

Figure 4. 2 Beast heads from the east end of the choir at Romsey. Like the double-head corbels above, enormous variation exists throughout and between these carvings.
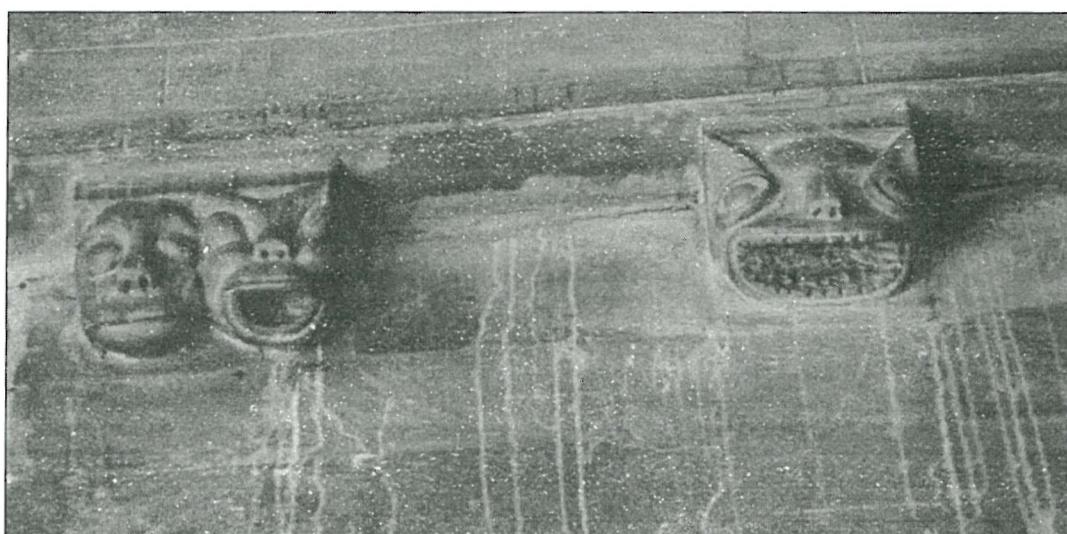
Figure 4. 3 Beast heads on the east face of the south transept at St John's, Devizes.
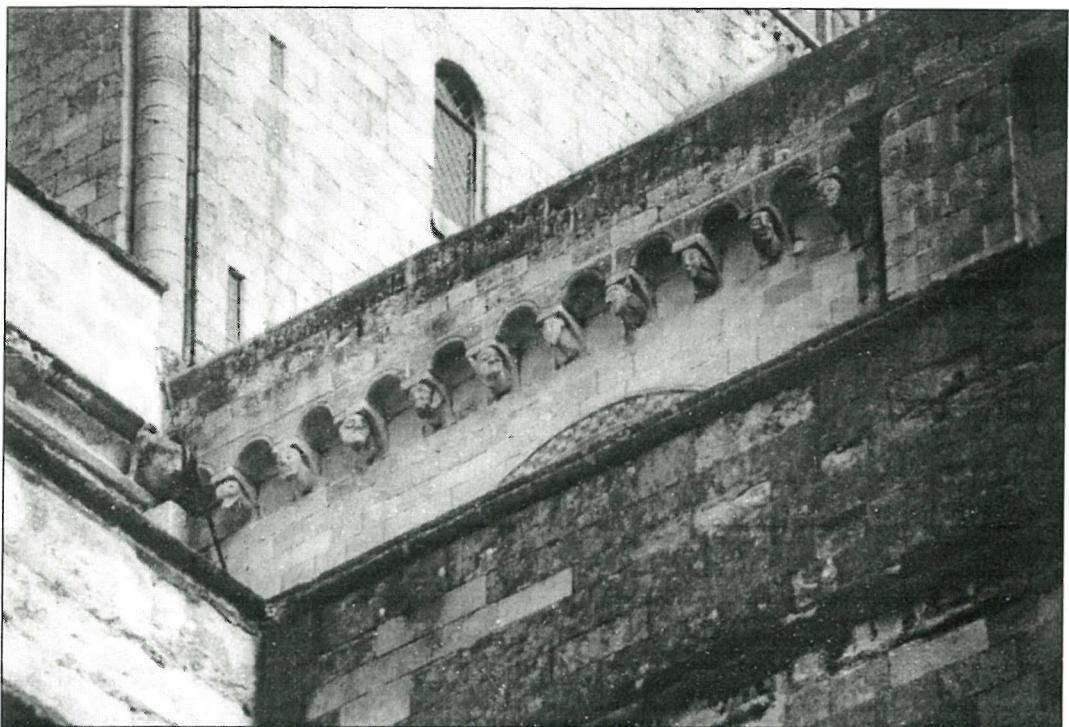
Figure 4. 4 Carved heads on the west side of the south transept at Winchester Cathedral.
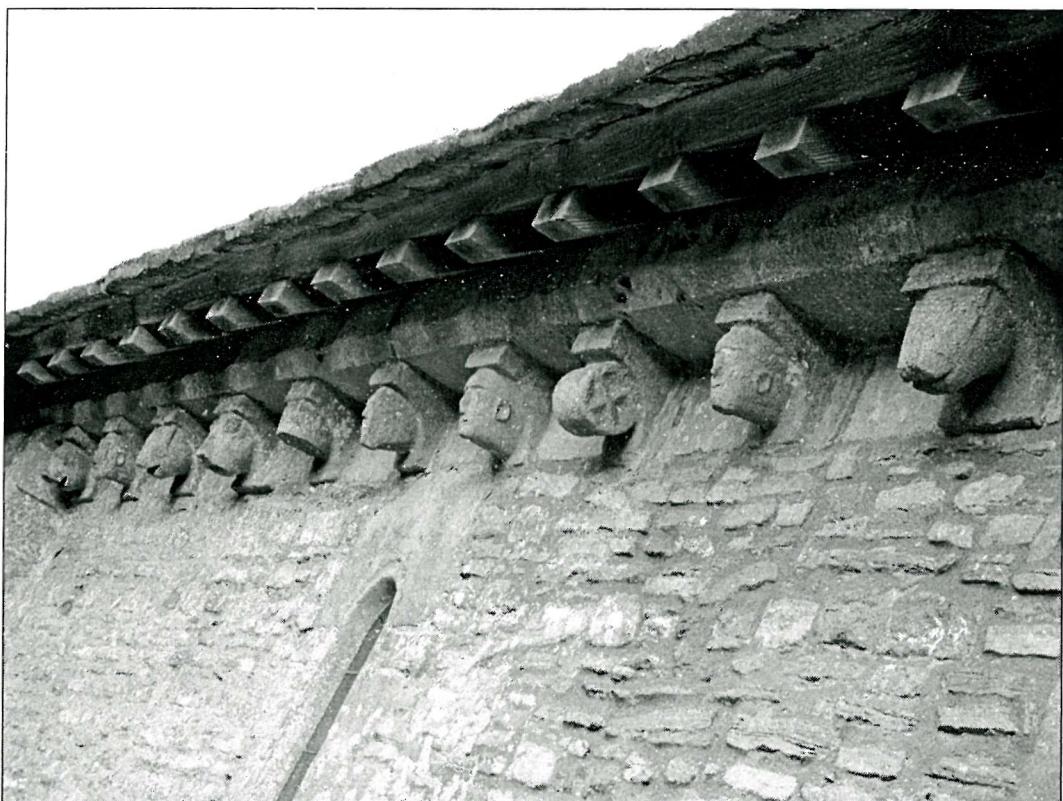
Figure 4. 5 Heads and geometric motifs from the corbel-table on the north side of the nave at Worth Matravers in Dorset.

from the east wall of the west tower at Milford-on-Sea (Fig. 6. 8), as well as from both sides of the nave at Worth Matravers (Fig. 4. 5).

Like the beast heads, human heads are commonly carved with a pair of arms. These are often impossibly slender and the head remains very much the focus of attention. Heads with arms and hands are often shown manipulating their face in some way, in particular the mouth, for example by pulling it open, pushing each side so that the lips contort, or twisting the chin (see, for examples, Figs 6. 7, 6. 12, 6. 13, 7. 9, 7. 10). Even when full figures are carved the emphasis upon the head is often apparent, carved so that it is disproportionately large in comparison to the rest of the body.

Heads displaying both human and animal characteristics are evident throughout twelfth-century corbel-tables. The larger sites such as Winchester Cathedral have several such images. In the majority of cases the human head provides the template to which are added pointed animal ears or horns.

Throughout the twelfth century there exists among the Romanesque sites in the region a general balance between corbels carved with human heads and corbels carved with animal heads. This begins to change in the early thirteenth century; by the later medieval period corbel-tables no longer feature animal or composite human/animal imagery but are carved with human heads only. At the same time corbels migrate to the interior of religious buildings to be replaced on the exterior by gargoyles and grotesques.

To account for such change it is necessary to consider a number of closely related factors. First, the roofline of medieval religious buildings was subject to changes in architectural fashion, in particular the Gothic development of the parapet. Corbel-tables, which had supported the eaves of the roof or the base of a parapet were used less and less as it became the norm to conceal roof-lines behind a parapet supported by the wall beneath. Increasingly corbels were used only on the interior of religious buildings, often in the nave and nave aisles as supports to roof beams. Such a shift in location is paralleled by the increased focus upon the human head as appropriate

subject matter. This tendency towards representing the human head at the expense of any other subject can be seen among externally located early thirteenth-century carved corbel-tables, for example those at Bishop's Cannings (Wiltshire) and Milford-on-sea. Gothic corbel-tables located on the interior continue this pattern, as the sequences in the naves in a number of Wiltshire churches illustrate (e.g. Oaksey, Wilsford, Netheravon, Bishop's Cannings, Devizes (St John), Broad Chalke and Calne). The carvings vary from the most simply executed (e.g. Netheravon) to the more detailed and expressive (e.g. St John's, Devizes). Typically the carvings represent the heads and shoulders of fashionably attired laymen and women (e.g. Netheravon, Devizes [Wiltshire], Alton [Hampshire]), although many follow a standard formula of alternating crowned and mitred heads. It is likely that this selection of imagery is closely related to the increasingly powerful role played by the wealthier lay members of the parish as patrons of church building, which found expression in the decoration of their space with images expressive of their high status.

Cornices, Friezes, Gargoyles and Grotesques

The tradition of roofline carvings exemplified by Romanesque corbel-tables finds expression in the Gothic period in carved cornices, friezes, gargoyles and grotesques.

Cornices are moulded ledges that project horizontally along the top of a building. They are frequently carved with geometric designs, heads and figures, a continuous band of which is known as a frieze. Romanesque friezes were probably far more common in this country than the limited remains suggest (see, for example, Kahn, 1992); it is likely that the later medieval frieze-like carvings represent more a development of established tradition than any sudden innovation (Goodall, 1995: 315). Certainly, they are deployed with some effect at a number of sites such as the churches at Brailes and Alkerton (Oxfordshire) where the cornices below the parapet crowning the south, east, and west ends of the south aisle at the former and the south side of the nave at the latter are crowded with carvings of heads forming a

highly ornate and tightly structured frieze (see Keyser, 1924: figs 1-5). Other examples including full figures as well as heads and geometric motifs occur at Pilton (Northamptonshire), Cogges, Bloxham, Hanwell and Adderbury (Oxfordshire), and Crick (Warwickshire) (Keyser, 1924; Goodall, 1995: 314). Ambitious friezes such as these are, however, uncommon further south.

Gargoyles and grotesques are found in a similar location, alone or in conjunction with a decorated cornice or frieze. Although there may be similarities between gargoyle and grotesque in terms of form and subject matter, there is a clear difference in function: a gargoyle is a water spout designed to throw the run-off from the roof clear of the building, while a grotesque has no architectural function whatsoever. The two are commonly found together and are in many cases difficult to tell apart. This is especially the case if there has been building work in the post-medieval period that has altered the roofline: disused gargoyles often differ little from their resolutely non-functional counterparts. Both gargoyles and grotesques are often more elaborately carved than Romanesque corbels (see, for examples, Bridaham, 1969; Benton 1992, 1995; 1996; 1997). This is largely due to the greater possibilities afforded by the different architectural demands, for freed from the constraints of a supportive element designs could evolve into large and, in some cases, complex images. For example, at St Cyriac's, Lacock (Wiltshire) there appears on the south-west corner of the nave a monster chained by the neck to the wall of the church, devouring what may have once been figures (Fig. 6. 6). The scale of the carving and its extension around the corner of the building lends it a frieze-like quality. This tendency towards larger sculptures is typical of late medieval architectural sculpture; some sequences of corbels, for example, follow a similar route (for example those in the naves at Alton and Holybourne in Hampshire).

Regional styles of carving gargoyles and grotesques are often clear. Particular to Somerset and parts of Dorset for example are carvings known as "hunky punks," a term probably derived from the combination of "hunkers" and "punchy," the former meaning squatting on the haunches, the latter meaning short or squat, 'characterised by a short thick set body and short legs' (Wright, 1982: 1). The style lends itself well

to images of beasts, which typically appear with puffed out chests and heads set back upon crouching bodies, in extreme cases appearing halfway or further along the back of the creature (Fig. 4. 6; see also Wright, 1982: 66 pl. 31). Forelimbs often appear set at awkward angles.

Like twelfth-century corbel-tables, Gothic gargoyles and grotesques in this area appear to maintain a broad balance between the representation of human heads and animal or beast heads (Fig. A2. 4). Although the two highest columns on the graph suggest a greater emphasis upon human heads than any other, the results from these sites must be balanced against those such as Brent Knoll (Somerset) and Sherborne (Dorset) at which beast heads and their variants outnumber human heads by some degree.

There is considerable innovation, however, when it comes to carvings that represent full figures. The most common animal represented is the lion, and composite animal figures are typically modelled upon its body combined with bat's wings, bird's talons, and an abundance of shaggy hair. To undoubtedly oversimplify matters this might be regarded as an outgrowth of the Romanesque corbel carver's fascination with feline-looking beast heads. However, what does appear to be held in common between Romanesque and Gothic roofline imagery is the desire to depict powerful animals. In the latter this is often accomplished by adding elements of other powerful animals to the basic leonine body to create a creature of intense, supernatural force. The result is a pantheon of ferocious-looking hybrid leonine forms angled to look out from the corners of towers or nave aisles, united in their articulation of a basic template composed of a leonine body with membranous wings attached at the shoulders (Fig. 4. 7).

One notable trend within later medieval architectural sculpture is the division of human from animal or composite images, the former gathering on the interior of religious buildings, the latter on the exterior. While gargoyles and grotesques do represent human heads and figures they often appear insignificant in comparison to their commonly more numerous fantastic beast neighbours, as the churches at Brent

Figure 4. 6 A detached carving of a lion in the Somerset "hunky punk" style – inverted body, chest pushed forward, and head angled back so that it appears level with the hindquarters. Fifteenth century, south porch, Combe St Nicholas.
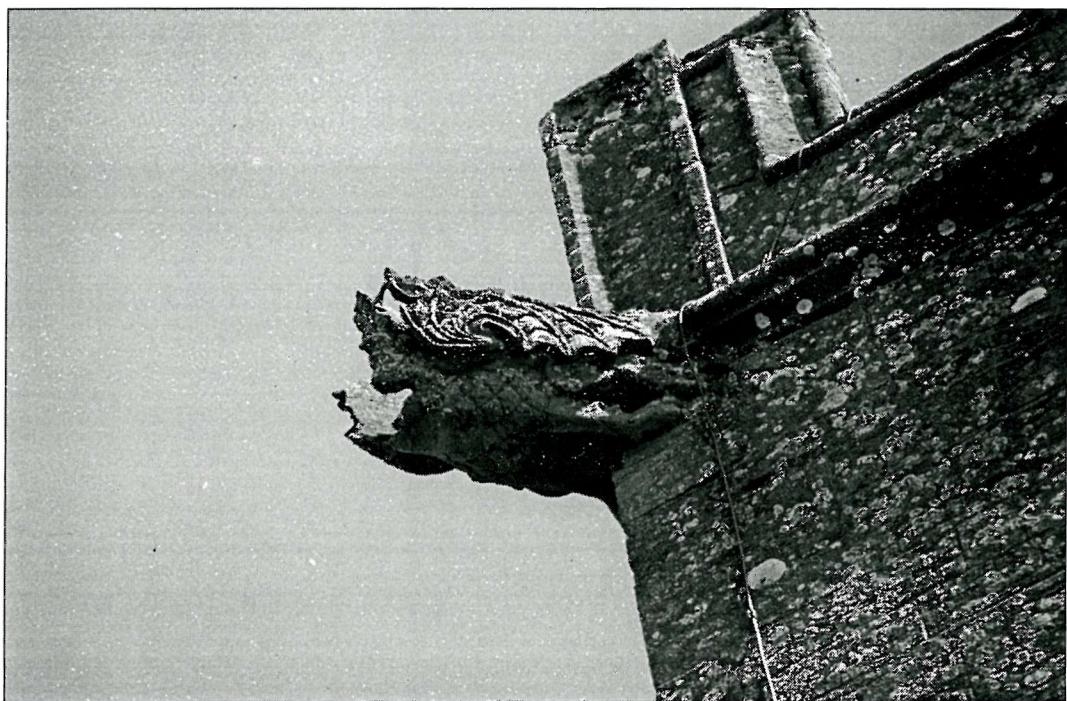
Figure 4. 7 Hybrid creature with membranous wings and partially leonine body. The central part of the head has broken away, although one eye and an ear are still visible. Located on the tower at Stoke sub Hamdon in Somerset.

Knoll, Lacock (St Cyriac), Edington, Mappowder, Sherborne, and Sydling St Nicholas demonstrate clearly. The exterior is also the location where hybrid human/animal figures may be found, such as the bird-man at Sydling St Nicholas (Fig. 7. 9) and the horned and hoofed demi-figure at Edington (Fig. 7. 8).

Arches

Whilst ubiquitous amongst corbel-tables, cornices, gargoyles and grotesques the carved head is not restricted to such roof edge locations in medieval architecture. Arches in particular, whether as arcades, entrances or windows, are favoured locations for a variety of carved media. The disembodied head is well represented upon many of these.

Voussoirs

The wedge-shaped stones that form the curve of the round-headed Romanesque-style arch are known as voussoirs (a complete arch of voussoirs is known as a voussure). Especially when they form part of a doorway, voussoirs are frequently carved. In those regions where Romanesque churches are numerous, such as Yorkshire and Oxfordshire, carved voussures are many (Salmon, 1947; Henry and Zarnecki, 1957/58; Wood, 1994). The Wessex area contains fewer examples although where they do occur, for example at Glastonbury Abbey and Malmesbury Abbey, the figurative carving is impressive (Hope, 1890; Wood, 1998).

Apart from geometric patterns such as chevrons (see Borg, 1967 for detail) voussoirs are frequently carved with what are termed "beakheads". A beakhead is an ornament taking the form of the head of a bird, beast, monster or human, the beak or jaw of which appears to grip the moulding across which it is carved (Clapham, 1934: 130). Usually found as a repeated form around the curve of a doorway, beak heads may also be found as a single motif on capitals and corbels. Examples from the south of

England include Bishop's Sutton (Hampshire), where the voussure of the south door features a single, repetitive beak motif (although the images vary considerably in size and treatment), Lullington (Somerset), Tortington (Sussex) and Shebbear (Devon), the latter featuring a mixed range of voussoirs carved with beast, bird and human heads (Fig. 4. 8).

Lintels and Tympana

The semicircular field between the lintel, the horizontal beam bridging the opening of a doorway, and the arch above it, is known as a tympanum (plural: tympana). Both tympanum and lintel might be carved, as at Little Langford (Wiltshire) (Powell, 1909), although more frequently carving is applied to the tympanum only (see, for examples, Keyser, 1927).

Apart from geometric designs tympana were often carved with animals, mythical creatures and other figurative scenes (see, for examples, Allen, 1887; Keyser, 1927). Hicks suggests that the spaces provided by lintels and tympana were used to articulate different meanings. Contrasting the hunting scenes found carved upon the lintels at several sites (e.g. Kedleston [Derbyshire]; Clifton Hamden [Oxfordshire]; Little Langford [Wiltshire]) she notes that it

> is interesting that such secular scenes are confined to the lintel, as were the
> hunting scenes and animal groups on the Irish high cross bases; this
> differential placing suggests an opposition between the narrative scene and
> the more symbolic function of the creatures on the tympanum above (Hicks,
> 1993: 267).

Wood (2001) also stresses the symbolic character of tympana, suggesting that the geometric designs commonly found upon them were used to articulate Christian conceptions of God as light and pure form, and connect them with the act of entering the building.

Figure 4. 8 Section of the south door at Shebbear carved with a variety of different beak head designs.

Figure 4. 9 Geometric motifs and stylized foliage characterize the eleventh-century capital designs at Alton.

The severed head motif does not appear to be particularly associated with either lintels or tympana. This may be because of the close proximity of architectural features that are, such as voussoirs and capitals, or due to these features being associated with different modes of imagery altogether.

Capitals

The late classical composite capital provided Romanesque carvers with some of their key motifs. Born out of the fusion of the spiralling volutes of the Ionic capital with the lush, stylized vegetation of the Corinthian capital the Composite had, by the Romanesque period, undergone a profound metamorphosis. Geometrically perfect volutes now careered into asymmetry; conversely, vegetation became increasingly geometric (Fig. 4. 9). From the late eleventh century typical Romanesque capitals were carved with 'a volute below each corner of the abacus, and the spaces between the volutes decorated with upright leaves in rows, or with figures, animals or masks' (Ballard, 1992: 7). Often, the foliage is replaced by figures or heads, as the south capital to the reset west door at Wickham (Hampshire) illustrates. As the twelfth-century progressed the repertoire of volutes, vegetation, geometric patterns, human heads and figures, animal heads and fantastic zoomorphs were combined freely, resulting in a vast range of complex designs (see Baltrušaitis, 1986). The capitals in the chancel at Romsey Abbey provide several examples (Figs 5. 5, 5. 12, 6. 4). Though clearly a high status sequence their eclecticism points to the incorporation and assimilation of native zoomorphic designs into the Christian canon as well as the development of narrative sequences involving human figures. By the twelfth century such a visual repertoire was well established.

The severed head motif can be found carved on capitals in various architectural locations. At Bere Regis (Dorset) human and animal heads look out from the corners of the broad scallop capitals that form part of the south arcade. Alton and Stogursey feature heads carved into the capitals beneath the crossing towers (Figs 5. 9, 5. 13). Capitals framing the entrances at Broadwey (Dorset) and Milborne Port (Somerset)

also feature the design. The capitals associated with the south door that formerly led from the cloister to the nave at Romsey Abbey bear Green Beast heads disgorging scrolling foliage (Fig. 5. 12) while the Romanesque west door at Newnham, also in Hampshire, features a capital carved with a similar design.

The characteristics of the Romanesque carved capital gradually conceded to new developments for in the early Gothic period highly intricate styles of foliage carving develop, providing the visual matrix for architectural sculpture for the rest of the Middle Ages (Gardner, 1927; Pevsner, 1945). In some cases the carved leaves extend some distance from the surface of the capital to suggest thick foliage, as exemplified by the work at sites such as Oakley (Hampshire) and Salisbury Cathedral (Wiltshire). In this period, although figurative work becomes rarer it does not completely disappear. Generally, however, the space available for carved work decreases, largely as a consequence of the development of the moulded or composite column. Late medieval capitals are often little more than strips of figurative work (e.g. those in the nave at Ottery St Mary, Devon; see also Figs 5. 28 and 7. 6).

Apexes

Many Romanesque arches do not possess elaborately carved voussures but are not entirely devoid of sculpted features. In these examples it is often the case that a carving will be located at the apex of the arch, and sometimes at its terminations as well (see below). Commonly these images are of heads such as those upon the nave arcades at Wimborne (Dorset). The nave arcades at Malmesbury Abbey (Wiltshire) feature apex carvings that reduce the head to a mask-like pair of eyes while the exterior of the north door at Nately Scures (Hampshire) also features a centrally located, plain human head, crowning a voussure of zigzag ornament.

The positioning of later medieval roofline imagery often appears to have followed similar principles, in that grotesques may be located directly above the point of a window.

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Terminations

Carvings at the termination of the arch, at the point at which it meets the abacus of the capital or, in the case of label stops, simply ends, were spaces commonly provided with images. A label stop occurs at the ends of a hood mould or label, the projecting moulding above an arch or lintel. Hood moulds occur in both interior and exterior locations, above arcades, doorways and windows, but are perhaps most common above windows – especially in Gothic carving – due to their ability to deflect water. Early examples may be found in Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman work at Deerhurst (Gloucestershire), Sherborne and Malmesbury, and feature beast and stylised human heads as stops. The later examples typically bear fairly uniform human heads (e.g. the exterior of the south side of the nave at Christchurch Priory), although by the fifteenth century their common plain and repetitive form is often elaborately worked to produce figures full of movement (for example those at Steeple Ashton, Wiltshire).

Reveals

Carvings set into the reveal of an arch (the part of a jamb between the door or the glass of a window and the outer wall surface) may also feature images of heads. Examples are common at entrance points, such as the south door at Ditteridge (Wiltshire) (Figs 5. 4a-b) and the north doors at Durnford (Wiltshire) and Barfreston (Kent). In all cases the heads are set one on each side so that they face each other, appearing to scrutinize whoever enters and leaves the building. At Durnford the heads disgorge foliage.

Misericords and Roof Bosses

Misericords are an entirely Gothic development. First appearing in the early thirteenth century (early examples in the south of the country occur at Exeter

Cathedral, Devon, and Christchurch Priory, Dorset) they are essentially under-seat ledges designed, when the seat itself is folded up, to support a leaning body. Misericords are highly context-specific; they occur only in the chancel area of a church and were used solely by clerics. Interest focusses upon the area beneath the ledge where it is common to find a carving, typically a main scene in the centre with two smaller "supporters" on either side. The wide variety of subjects and scenes carved upon misericords makes them a popular subject for academic and popular enquiry alike (see, for examples spanning the last century, Church, 1907; Swann, 1917; Owst, 1934; Anderson, 1954; Remnant, 1969; Moore, 1992; Grossinger, 1989, 1997b, 1997c; Harding, 1998a).

Heads are represented frequently amongst some sequences of misericords, although they are usually outnumbered by figures. Alternatively the head may serve as one or both of the supporters, those images that occur each side of the main carving. At Winchester Cathedral animal and human heads, the latter often in contemporary and high status headgear, are common as both central and supporter imagery. Foliate heads, grimacing heads and the heads of harpies with small talons peeping out from beneath their chin are also carved (Callé, 1994). All the supporters in the sequence at Wells Cathedral represent foliage and there is only one central image representing a head – that of a human with asses ears. The rest of the carvings are figures of animals, monsters or humans. A similar picture emerges from the misericords at Christchurch Priory (Dorset), where the emphasis is placed upon full figures of humans or monsters rather than just the head.

Imagery common to misericords also occurs on roof bosses. Roof bosses are carved wooden or stone projections placed where the ribs in a vault intersect whose systematic study owes much to the work of Charles Cave. In the first half of the twentieth century Cave published extensively upon the topic (see, for example, Cave, 1927, 1932, 1934, 1948) illustrating his work with high quality images. Recent work has continued in Cave's photographically detailed manner (e.g. Rose and Hedgecoe, 1997; Haward, 1999) while popular interest in their imagery means that at many sites

with roof boss sequences an illustrated guide to the carvings is available (e.g. Swanton, 1979; Smith, 1996).

Although the contact points of stone vaults had been carved in the Romanesque period (e.g. the apse at Kilpeck, Herefordshire) the creation of roof bosses and their elaborate carving begins in earnest with the development of the Gothic style. An early sequence may be found within the tower at Bishop's Cannings (Wiltshire). These early thirteenth-century roof bosses are carved in stone and represent subjects typical of Romanesque marginal iconography, albeit in a more restrained manner (see figs). As the Gothic develops so roof bosses become more elaborate. Some sites preserve an enormous number of carved bosses. Lacock Abbey (Wiltshire) for example has over 200 in the surviving claustral ranges alone. Typical late medieval subjects include hybrid and mythical creatures such as sirens, harpies, mermaids, centaurs, dragons; recognisable animals such as the lion, bear, fox, eagle, owl; human heads and figures, both ecclesiast and lay; dancers and tumblers; Green Men; heraldic shields and other secular livery, and purely foliate designs.

Apotropaic Heads and Other Images

The ubiquity of the image of the head throughout medieval architectural sculpture is of some interest for it is one of many images that have long been associated with the power to protect from harm. Images or other objects perceived to be effective in such a way are known as apotropaic; they are often associated with the power to repel the "evil eye".

During the Middle Ages two main theories of how the eye functioned were current. Extromission 'viewed the eye as a lamp that sent out fiery visual rays, which literally lighted upon an object and made it visible' while intromission held that the image rather than the eye sent forth rays (Camille, 1996a: 22). Thus the eye, as a window to the interior world of the body, afforded easy access for emanations from without and

to emanations from within. Evil spirits, for example, might enter through the eye and be exorcised via the same organ (Moss and Capannari, 1976: 3). The danger of the visual world extended to the imagination which was understood to be not only 'a cognitive faculty lodged in the front of the brain, nearest the eyes and thus closely linked to vision, but a force that could actually create forms' (Camille, 1992: 90). As an intermediary between mind and matter the imagination was what allowed demons

> to couple with human beings, since what was perceived in the *phantasia* was, in some cases, real. It was for this reason that pregnant women were urged not to look at monkeys or even to think of monstrous things, lest their imaginations impregnate their offspring with hideous forms. Similarly, it was a medical commonplace that if an adulteress thought of her husband during the sexual act her child would resemble not her partner, but the absent husband. Vision was both fecund and dangerous (*ibid.*).

It is within such an "active" context that medieval images must be considered. This is also a context in which belief in the power of the evil eye flourishes.

Despite regional variations and specific cultural circumstances (Migliore, 1997: 12-13) the evil eye 'is a fairly consistent and uniform folk belief complex based upon the idea that an individual, male or female, has the power, voluntarily or involuntarily, to cause harm to another individual or his property merely by looking at or praising that person or property' (Dundes, 1981: 258). Maloney notes the common features as follows:

> (1) power emanates from the eye (or mouth) and strikes some object or person; (2) the stricken object is of value, and its destruction or injury is sudden; (3) the one casting the evil eye may not know he has the power; (4) the one affected may not be able to identify the source of the power; (5) the evil eye can be deflected or its effects modified or cured by particular devices, rituals, and symbols; (6) the belief helps to explain or rationalize sickness, misfortune, or loss of possessions such as animals or crops; and (7) in at least

some functioning of the belief everywhere, envy is a factor (Maloney, 1976: vii-viii).

For the purposes of this thesis it is point number 5, that the evil eye can be deflected or its effects modified by particular devices, rituals, and symbols, in particular, images, which is of the most interest (for discussion of the other areas see Elworthy, 1958 [1895]; Gordon, 1937; DiStasi, 1981; Migliore, 1997).

The focus upon envy as the medium in which the evil eye operates firmly grounds it into the world of human behaviour; what must not be overlooked, however, is that the evil eye is but one embodiment of the source of evil which may be perceived to have a human or divine origin (Moss and Cappanari, 1976: 2). In chapter 2 I spent some time exploring the possibility that medieval understandings of the sacred recognized within it a terrible and life threatening, as well as life sustaining, power. In order to protect from the malevolent aspects of the sacred that would likely be encountered by spiritual activity, images were used as architectural amulets and talismans.

In general, apotropaic images work according to two main methods. In the first instance the intention may be to attract and/or trap malevolent power, and thereby render it harmless. Alternatively the image may work to repel it completely. These aims are achieved in a number of ways and often work simultaneously.

The anthropologist Alfred Gell suggests that complex patterns present to the mind 'unfinished business' (1998: 80). This is a binding force. Patterns 'slow perception down, or even halt it, so that the decorated object is never fully possessed at all, but is always in the process of becoming possessed' (*ibid.* 81). In terms of apotropaia this "adhesiveness" is a powerful principle: 'Apotropaic patterns are demon-traps, in effect, demonic fly-paper, in which demons become hopelessly stuck, and are thus rendered harmless' (*ibid.* 84). Gell illustrates his argument with a number of examples, including southern Indian *kolam* designs, Cretan mazes, and Celtic knotwork. About the latter Gell suggests:

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Knotwork like this was regarded as protective in that any evil spirit would be so fascinated by the entwined braids as to suffer from a paralysis of the will. Losing interest in whatever malevolent plan it had entertained previously, the demon would become stuck in the coils of the pattern and the object, person, or place protected by it would be saved (*ibid.*).

As well as intricate pattern, Gell suggests that repetition could have the same effect for 'the interminableness of large numbers and complicated patterns work in the same way' (*ibid.*).

To repel evil as opposed to ensnaring it requires different strategies. Noting that the gaze of the evil eye consistently effects a general drying up (e.g. fruit trees wither, cows stop producing milk, feverish sickness grips children and adults), Dundes suggests that the associated apotropaia aim to protect the vital waters that create and sustain life. He writes: 'Life depends upon liquid. From the concept of the "water of life" to semen, milk, blood, bile, saliva, and the like, the consistent principle is that liquid means life while loss of liquid means death' (Dundes, 1981: 266). Consequently, representation of the life force is often crucial to an effective apotropaic image. The sexual organs, for example, or images that allude to sexual union have been popular in this capacity since at least the Roman period (Johns, 1982: 61-75).

At a deeper level, perhaps, recognition that the sacred is incomprehensible and therefore resistant to the categories upon which human systems of knowledge and meaning are based, means that the closest that it is possible to get to picturing the sacred, and thus creating an effective apotropaic image, is by entering the gaps or thresholds between meanings. Indeterminability has long held an esteemed position in some cultures as an effective means of protection against attacks of supernatural or occult origin (Hildburgh, 1944, 1945); this may be due to the principle of like repels like. Such liminal zones can be represented by hybrid and composite beings that mix together parts of different species; they can also be represented more

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symbolically by parts of the body, such as the mouth, eyes, or genitalia, all of which can be considered somatic thresholds. Masks and disguises, in concealing identity, also enter a subject into similar territory (Camille, 1998a: 239-252) while the repertoire of the grotesque, as well as the disembodied head are also suitable.

Billingsley notes that the image of the head,

> continually introduces the observer to the interface of the everyday world
> with other dimensions ... The irrational and magical element is implicit in
> votive heads ... and cannot be dismissed from consideration; they are, in the
> last resort, wedded to religious ritual and belief (Billingsley, 1998: 6).

This is because the head is commonly regarded as the point at which the soul is connected most strongly to the material body, a belief that has informed many superstitions and customs (Smith, 1962, 1963). In medieval art this connection is clear in illustrations of the Tree of Life in which human souls are represented as heads enclosed in leaves (see den Hartog, 1996: figs 8-10). In the illustration from the *Hortus Deliciarum* Eve is created while Adam sleeps beneath the Tree of Life, which, in each of its five fleshy leaves bears a human head. The emphasis of the scene upon the creation of life reinforces the connection between the head and the soul or rather the head as symbol for the soul. Carved capitals at St Servius in Maastricht and Romsey Abbey also depict human heads among leaves. This close association between the head, the soul, and foliage is likely to inform the symbolism of the Green Man and other foliate heads, as discussed in chapter 5.

Antefixa and Romano-British Heads

Ross (1967) devotes considerable space to representations of the human head in Iron Age carving and other artistic media, discussing the occurrences of, variations on and reverence paid to the head, together with its association with religious temples and

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sacred springs. A persistent theme throughout all aspects of Celtic life, Ross concludes that,

> In common with their continental neighbours, the insular Celts venerated the head as a symbol of divinity and the powers of the otherworld, and regarded it as the most important important bodily member, the very seat of the soul ... the human head seems to have been used by them as an attempt to portray the concept of divinity and the mysterious powers of the otherworld which concerned them so deeply (1967: 124).

Accordingly, the head was suited for use as a protective image as the numerous finds of *antefixa* demonstrate.

Antefixa are decorated terracotta plaques that were used to conceal the ends of the roof tiles on classical temples. Similar architectural terracottas were used throughout the buildings of the ancient Eastern Mediterranean to protect the exposed ends of the rafters or bricks from the elements as well as to hide any imperfections that might exist in the brick or woodwork. Antefixa may thus be regarded as religious architectural sculpture. Much like Romanesque corbel-tables, the designs frequently repeated themselves along the length of the building.

It is commonly acknowledged that *antefixa* served a symbolic protective role as well as a structural one, 'conferring protection on the building into which they were incorporated' (Ross, 1967: 99; see also Strong, 1914: 164-5; Van Buren, 1914: 192). This 'distinctly apotropaic significance' was closely connected with particular images: the Gorgon's head featured prominently, and the 'same protective function attached to the figures of Sirens or of Harpies with hands and also feet held outwards in a gesture of aversion' (Van Buren, 1914: 192; Strong, 1914: 164). Animal masks, figurative scenes, and, in particular, the human head, were also common designs (Ross, 1967: 99-103).

Geometric Designs and Heads

The series of antefixa from Caerleon illustrated by Ross (1967: pl. 37) feature geometric designs as well as heads. These triangular tiles date to about 70-110 AD and in each case the image is executed in high relief. A cross-shape, four pointed stars, and an eight-spoked wheel as well as various striations and stylised foliage patterns appear next to or above the heads. Bearing in mind Gell's comments upon apotropaic patterns, these abstract designs lend further credence to the concept of antefixa as primarily protective (see also Strong, 1914; Van Buren, 1914).

Although geometric designs were often used as apotropaia alone (Merrifield, 1987: 125), in combination with the head they may have been regarded as particularly potent. The incised profile cut out head found beside an eleventh-century woodworker's shop at Christ Church Place, Dublin, provides an example from outside of an architectural context. The head, cut from an antler blade, has highly stylized facial features and is engraved with a pentagram on one side and a triquetra on the other. While these could have served as maker's marks 'they are more likely to constitute symbolic graffiti, since both these motifs were the most popular divine and apotropaic symbols of the Middle Ages' (O'Meadhra, 1991: 53; see also Merrifield, 1987: 125). Their connection with the head in this example is overt.

Staying in Ireland a further good example of geometric designs in connection with a figurative image may be found on the keystone carved with a sheela-na-gig at Balinderry Castle, County Galway. The central figure with an oversized head is surrounded by a variety of different motifs, including two that mimic thick braids on either side of the head, one appearing as a plait, the other as a striated interlace design. Two circular patterns are carved on each side of the figure. On the figure's right these are an interlaced triquetra and a six petalled flower motif; on the figure's left appear a triskele within a circle and an intricate pattern based upon eightfold symmetry. These designs highlight the centrally placed, standing sheela who has a head about the same length as her torso and between her legs what 'appears to be a rush of liquid, perhaps indicating urine or menstruation, or some other unidentified

object' (McMahon and Roberts, 2001: 114) (Fig. 4. 10). Sheela-na-gigs are commonly regarded as apotropaic figures (see Jones, 2000b: 914) although details as to why this should be so are rarely given. In this example a number of apotropaic techniques are utilised: 1) the emission of body fluids, which relates to Dundes' evil eye theory (body fluids/water as the stuff of life, therefore counter to the "drying" effect of the evil eye); 2) the emphasis on the head and genitals, both of which are liminal parts of the body and extensively used as apotropaia in Roman and Celtic contexts;[1] 3) grotesque disfiguration, which by distorting the body and emphasizing its points of connection with the world plays upon categorical definitions and thus enters the figure into liminal territory (see Wace, 1903-1904; Bakhtin, 1984: 317); 4) the concentration of different geometric designs (Gell's 'unfinished business' or 'demonic fly-paper'); and 5) the highly visible location above the main entrance to the building. All suggest that this is a strongly protective image.

Foundation Sacrifices and Other Ritual Deposits

The consistent use of the head as a foundation deposit lends further weight to its apotropaic credentials. Ritual deposits for the protection of buildings were common in Roman times and the practice continued through the medieval period.

Animal deposits are much more common than human remains in association with buildings, although the Romans did bury humans (Merrifield, 1987: 50-51). Although this practice was increasingly replaced by animal sacrifices and images, it may have continued in some places (Loewenthal, 1978: 7). Generally, however, throughout Anglo-Saxon and later times animals or part of an animal were used, particularly parts of the head such as the skull or jawbone (Merrifield, 1987: 117).

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[1] In addition to the above discussion on antefixa see, for more Roman examples of apotropaic imagery in various contexts, Clarke, 1996; Dunbabin and Dickie, 1983; Dunbabin, 1989: especially 33-46; and Kellum, 1996.

Figure 4. 10 The sheela-na-gig at Balinderry Castle.

The symbolic potential of the human head as an appropriate apotropaic device for inclusion within the architectural framework of a building persisted among medieval work. Billingsley notes that the main route of development of the severed head motif, 'and the one by which its customary relationship to ritual space continued to be observed, was in sculpture, particularly the stone sculpture of the medieval churches' (Billingsley, 1998: 38). As foundation deposits testify, it is the presence rather than the visibility of something considered an effective apotropaic device that is important. This might go some way towards explaining the discovery, in 1959, of a corbel carved with a human head among the rubble used to block a twelfth-century window at the church of St Mary in Bedford (now in Bedford Museum) (Gardiner, 2003). Although this might simply have been handy fill material, its presence echoes a long tradition of real or symbolic interments within the structures of both religious and secular buildings.

Conclusion

The hypothesis that much medieval sculpture 'may be amuletic, when it is not telling a simple story, biblical or fabulous' (Loewenthal, 1978: 3) has been present in the literature since the mid-nineteenth century at least. In the latter half of 1859 debate was sparked by an anonymous querent in the journal *Notes and Queries* who asked where an explanation of 'the grotesque figures often seen in old churches' might be found ('Querist', 1859: 130). A flurry of responses throughout successive volumes elicited varying answers ranging from the didactic to the survival of pagan festivities. One commentator, however, stated that 'I have always understood that the design of the grotesques, which are so often seen in churches and in other old buildings, *is to drive away evil spirits*' (Boys, 1859: 275). The idea is still very much current (Sütterlin, 1989).

Certainly, it is not difficult to find among medieval architectural sculpture images that fit the criteria of apotropaia. Romanesque corbels are frequently repetitive in their

imagery and overwhelming in number. The parish church of St Nicholas in Worth Matravers (Dorset), for example, features a total of 64 carved corbels along just the north and south walls of the nave and chancel. Although geometric motifs are present, by far the majority of these are carved with staring beast or human heads. At Romsey Abbey the number of carved corbels enters the hundreds, and again, as mentioned earlier, heads are prominent. The hybrid bat-winged leonine beasts or shaggy-haired grylli common as late medieval gargoyles and grotesques at sites as diverse as Winchester Cathedral or the rural church at Leigh (Dorset) may also be read as apotropaic, presenting a restless energetic form and often ferocious visage. In many of these examples too, the carver has emphasized the head, typically by enlarging it out of proportion to the other body parts. Loewenthal documents a number of images that were incorporated into medieval art from the ancient Near East, among them offensive gestures and the signs of the Zodiac, the latter 'credited with apotropaic power' since the earliest times (Loewenthal, 1978: 4; see also Green, 1983). Trees and thorny plants, themselves connected to a great deal of magical lore, were viewed in a similar light throughout Oriental and Greek culture and it is notable that the Greek Acanthus, the plant depicted upon the Corinthian capital and its Romanesque derivatives, is also spiny (Loewenthal, 1978: 8).

Apotropaic imagery questions the art-historical assumption that all images are necessarily intended for view by a human audience. Whilst this does not mean that they are beyond fashion, the reasons for their creation are likely to be rooted in a traditional view of the natural world as contingent upon and intertwined with the supernatural, the malevolent aspects of which make it necessary to take precautions. Not only does this help to explain the typically obscure location of these images but their content as well. It is something that must be borne in mind throughout the chapters that follow.

Foliage Disgorgers and Foliate Creatures

Introduction

Foliage is ubiquitous amongst medieval sculpture. Romanesque incorporation of foliate designs from Oriental, Classical and Germanic cultures such as the vine scroll, stylised acanthus leaf, and interlace motifs developed throughout the Gothic period, resulting in a succession of new styles and features (Gardner, 1927). One particular aspect of medieval architectural foliate imagery is the close connection of certain animals, and indeed, the blending of animal and human elements, with vegetation. Such images – heads disgorging foliage, together with animals with partially foliate bodies – are the focus of this chapter, which is divided into four sections. Two of these introduce and describe the imagery and its locations in the Romanesque and later medieval periods. The other two sections weave these into a discussion around the themes of resurrection and corruption, perhaps the two most prominent ideas encapsulated by partially vegetal images.

Romanesque Carvings

The Tree of Life

The Tree of Life flanked by animals or birds was originally a Near-Eastern motif, already ancient by the time of its incorporation into Romanesque sculpture (James, 1966). The popularity of this oriental pagan symbol among Christian communities of the eleventh and twelfth centuries may be explained by the ease with which it lent itself to Christian mythology. Trees figure prominently in some of the major events

in both Old and New Testaments, for example, the awakening to knowledge in the Garden of Eden and the realisation of immortal life through the Crucifixion. Certainly, a close relationship between the Tree and the cross of the crucifixion and by extension Christ and the return to Paradise was current in medieval art and thought (Wood, 1997: 5; Doel and Doel, 2001: 58-59).

In Romanesque art the Tree of Life is typically represented as a stem from which sprout spiralling, volute-like branches, and is usually accompanied by a pair of animals or fabulous creatures and/or birds. Capitals and tympana are the typical media. For example, among the carved capitals beneath the crossing tower at Alton the Tree of Life appears as a palmette-crowned column with volutes accompanied by a pair of confronted, hooved quadrupeds (Fig. 5. 1). Each animal turns its head backward to bite at its tail. At Stogursey (Somerset) two of the late eleventh- or very early twelfth-century carved capitals beneath the crossing tower are carved with Tree of Life designs, both of which face towards the nave. The south-east capital displays two pairs of confronted wyverns (a dragon with one pair of wings and one pair of legs) whose bodies frame small stylised fronds. The north-east capital presents a more chaotic group, the central Tree appearing as a slender column that divides into two spiral branches at its tip and from whose trunk sprouts two pairs of symmetrically placed spiral branches (Fig. 5. 2). The base of the capital is also carved with spiral motifs and on each side of the Tree are two vertically positioned quadrupeds. The southernmost image is impossible to decipher beyond this, having suffered some damage, but is likely to have mirrored is counterpart. This twists its long neck backward over the body and extends a tongue of substantial length, the end of which trails upon its hindquarters. Next to each beast, on the north and south faces of the capital, are carved two ambiguous feline/equine beasts in profile with their heads turned to one side. From the shape of the bodies and the absence of hooves these are most likely lions rather than horses, despite local fame as such (Ballard, 1992: 32), the mane rendered in such a way that it resembles that of a horse. The tail of the one on the south face sprouts into a Ringerike-style foliate tip.
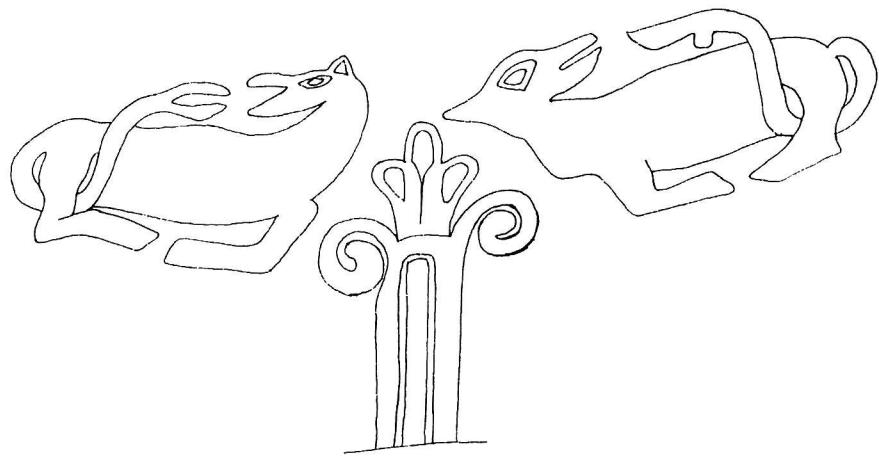
Figure 5. 1 The Tree of Life with attendant beasts from a late eleventh-century capital (c1070) at Alton in Hampshire.

Figure 5. 2 One of the capitals beneath the crossing tower at Stogursey (Somerset). Although damaged, the image of a central stylised Tree and attendant beasts is still discernable.

Tympana carved with the Tree of Life and attendant beasts occur at a number of sites. An early example (late tenth or early eleventh century) may be found at Knook (Wiltshire) (Taylor, 1968: 54). Here the Tree comprises thick scrolling foliage encircling a pair of confronted beasts that bite upon the stems, one of which is a lion, the other a partially foliate creature with a beak.[1] At Lullington (Somerset) the partially decorated main stem of the Tree divides into three branches and occupying similar positions to the beasts at Knook, on the viewer's right there is a lion, to the viewer's left, a griffin (Fig. 5. 3). Both creatures dominate the space of the carving, the Tree upon which they feed tiny by contrast. In some cases the close connection established between confronted serpentine and leonine beasts (dragons, griffins, lions) and the Tree of Life allowed for the confronted pair to be carved alone, without a central tree, and without any loss of potential significance (Wood, 1997: 4). The reset tympanum at Wynford Eagle (Dorset) displays such a configuration, carved as it is with a pair of confronted wyverns (Alford, 1984: 8-9) while the tympanum above the south door to the nave at Milborne Port houses a pair of lions (Wood, 1997).

In some instances dragon/lion pairs, familiar from their Tree of Life contexts on tympana, also occur on capitals that appear either side of doorways, for example, the south doors at Broadwey and Ditteridge (Fig. 5. 4). In these examples, both without figurative tympana, the door itself takes the position of the Tree of Life. It is possible that serpentine and leonine creatures flanking entrances in such a manner may have featured an intended symbolism that served to connect the interior space of the church and the act of entering into it with the associations of renewal carried by the Tree (see also Bradley, 1988).

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[1] The twisting body of this creature has caused confusion, being represented differently by different writers. H. M. Taylor (1968: 55) depicts a beaked beast with a curious, small wing-like protuberance just behind its shoulder with one of the rear legs curling around to become a thin foliate stem ending in a stubby volute. In contrast, Rita Wood's drawing (1997: 2) presents a dog-like creature with a snout without rear legs at all, the body terminating in an unequally divided tail. The stubby wings presented by Taylor have become part of the scrolling foliage. Wood calls this animal a 'sort of serpent' (1997: 4); the creature appears to combine leonine, avian and serpentine features – a kind of dragon/griffin.

Figure 5. 3 The tympanum at Lullington. A griffin and a lion flank the central Tree of Life, biting the ends of its branches.
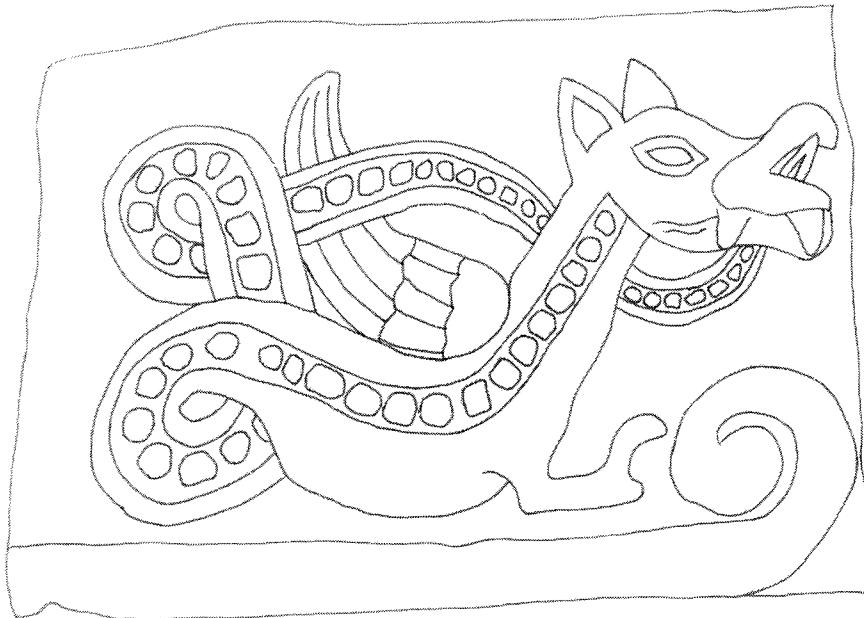
Figure 5. 4a The image from the west side of the south door at Ditteridge in Wiltshire, depicting a wyvern with the tip of its tail in its mouth. Whilst carved on a solid block of stone set into the wall the image mimics a decorated capital, both in its location below the lintel and in its incorporation of a volute-like spiral beneath the wyvern.
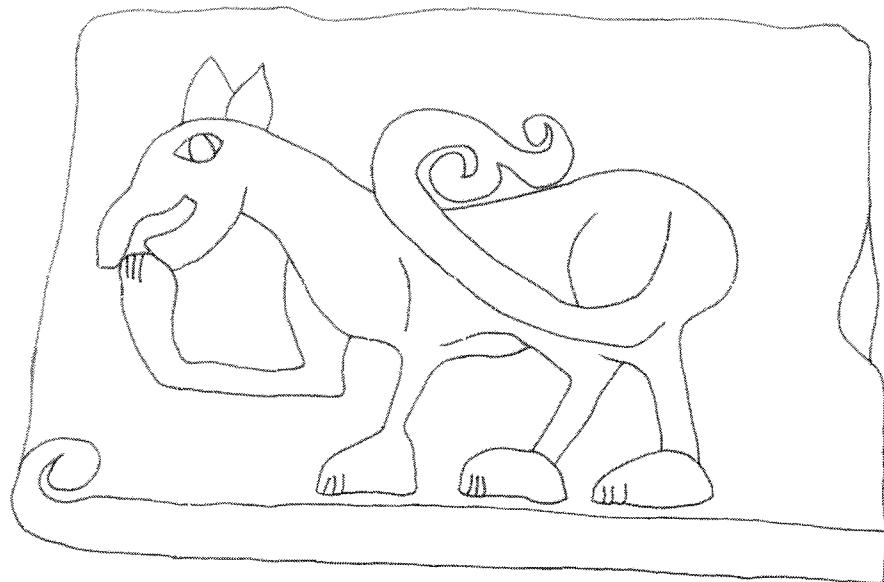
Figure 5. 4b The motif that appears carved on the opposite side of the same door at Ditteridge represents a leonine-like creature with one paw in its mouth. The combination of dragon and lion is common in Romanesque work in the region.

Foliate Creatures

Foliate Creatures are those carvings that depict individual beasts, parts of whose bodies become foliage (usually the tail or rear legs). These images may also be Green in the sense discussed below – disgorging vegetation from the mouth or extruding it through the face, although this is by no means always the case.

In Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman Romanesque sculpture the representation of animals and beasts whose bodies become foliage is fairly common and may derive largely from the tradition of inhabited plant scroll and its developments. Like the creatures that attend the Tree of Life in this period the majority of foliate creatures are based on feline and serpentine forms (e.g. lions, griffins, and all forms of dragons), a bias that persists throughout the later Middle Ages as well.

Apart from some of the carvings on the tympana already mentioned, foliate creatures may be found on capitals in the retrochoir at Romsey Abbey (Fig. 5. 5). Here, as well as disgorging scrolling foliage, the tails of the two pairs of addorsed[2] lions sprout into vegetation. Like other carvings of lions in both Romanesque and Gothic periods, the beasts here possess curiously humanoid faces. The suggestion that due to lions being exotic creatures medieval sculptors 'had no idea what lions really looked like' and consequently based their heads upon human models, may not be all that far from the truth (Harte, 2001: 13). Certainly, in some cases lions appear to be assembled from other creatures, the equine character of those on the capitals at Stogursey being a case in point. However, many leonine representations in this period do not confuse human and animal characteristics suggesting the possibility that the Romsey carvings, as well as humanoid lions elsewhere, were intentionally ambiguous.

The tails of the Romsey lions curve tightly upward between the rear legs to sprout into two spiral foliate stems over the hindquarters of each. This representation of the tail is by no means uncommon and, in both Romanesque and later periods, seems to

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[2] In profile, bodies roughly symmetrical, the hindquarters of each animal closest together.

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Figure 5. 5 One of the two pairs of foliate lions carved on capitals at Romsey Abbey.

Figure 5. 6 One of the late medieval carved bench ends at Bradford
Abbas (Dorset). This example is carved with a griffin whose split
tail tip echoes Romanesque traditions of carving lions and partially
leonine beasts with a foliate or stylised foliate tail.

Figure 5. 7 The south capital of the west door at Netheravon (Wiltshire). A feline beast is still visible in outline, with its tail pointing sharply upwards between the rear legs. The two spirals in the centre may represent a stylised Tree of Life; certainly, foliage is apparent.

Figure 5. 8 The west capital of the south door at Broadwey (Dorset), illustrated here rotated by ninety degrees to show the lion upright instead of inverted. Like the carving at Netheravon, the lion is represented with its tail angled upright through the rear legs.

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be particularly associated with leonine or part leonine creatures (Figure 5. 6). In some cases the tail does not sprout into foliage at all, as illustrated by the griffin on a reset voussoir at Binstead on the Isle of Wight (illustrated on page 8). In others the tail appears as a bulbous club such as that possessed by the lions on capitals at Netheravon and Broadwey (Figs 5.7 and 5. 8). It is significant that the Latin word for tail, *cauda*, also alluded to the penis and in these images in which the tail not only appears through the rear legs but also erect, it is difficult to avoid making the connection (Caviness, 2001: chapter 3, note 68).

In addition to lions, dragons are often represented as partially foliate. Manuscripts dating back to the tenth century terminate their scrolling bodies with foliage and the connection continued in a variety of other media throughout the Middle Ages (Harte, 2001: 12). Heterogeneous combinations of serpentine, reptilian and avian characteristics, dragons in medieval sculpture take a variety of forms. The simplest

Figure 5. 9 A winged serpent mimics the shape of the drooping vegetation disgorged by a human head on a late eleventh-century capital at Alton.

form is the worm, essentially a serpent with a reptilian head, long snout and prominent ears. Winged examples may be found in Romanesque carvings such as that at Alton exhaled from the mouth of a Green Man ([Fig. 5. 9] thereby reinforcing the dragon/vegetation connection; see also the tenth-century font at St Edmund's, Dolton [Devon] upon which appear a pair of serpentine creatures partially caught in twisting interlace foliage emerging from the nostrils of a human head). The wyvern, however, is by far the most popular Romanesque representation. Here the dragon form moves closer to the reptilian than the serpentine, acquiring an identifiable body rather than being the same thickness from nose to tail as well as possessing one pair of legs and frequently

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a pair of wings as well.[3] Confronted pairs of wyvern-type dragons may be found on capitals at Romsey and Stogursey (the Romsey pairs, however, without wings – see Fig. 5. 10) and on the tympana at Wynford Eagle (Dorset). A corbel on the exterior of the north side of the nave at Lullington displays a non-confronted couple while the westernmost capital of the south door at Ditteridge features a single wyvern (Fig. 5. 4a). Variants such as the Amphisbaena, a dragon with a head on the end of its tail, also figure amongst Romanesque as well as later work, a two-tailed and therefore three-headed example carved on a capital at Broadwey (Fig. 5. 11). The four-legged dragon, like the worm, appears to be more common to late medieval carving than Romanesque work.
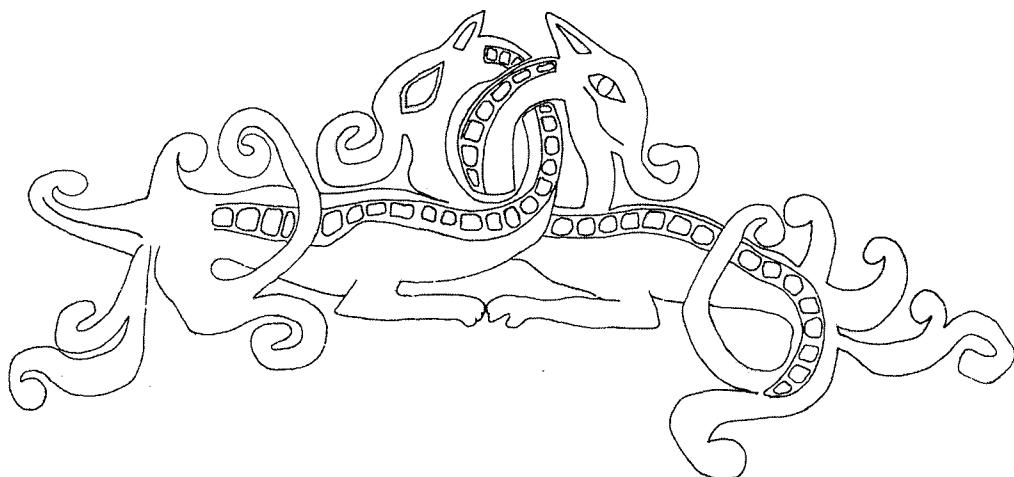
Figure 5. 10 Confronted and intertwined wyverns from a capital at Romsey (c1120-50).

Green Figures

Unlike the foliate creatures whose extremities dissolve into foliage the images referred to as "Green" are here defined as those which disgorge foliage from the mouth, or which sprout foliage from nose, eyes, ears, or through the face in some

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[3] Although the later medieval period uniformly represents the wings of dragons and other hybrid creatures as membranous, this was not so for the eleventh and twelfth centuries. During this period feathered wings are carved on creatures such as griffins (Binstead), wyverns (Stogursey), and winged serpents (Alton).

Figure 5. 11 The east capital of the south door at Broadwey in Dorset is carved with an Amphisbaena, a dragon with an additional head at the tip of the tail. In this example the dragon is a wyvern (two-legged) and has two tails, each with one head. The tails wind around each leg.
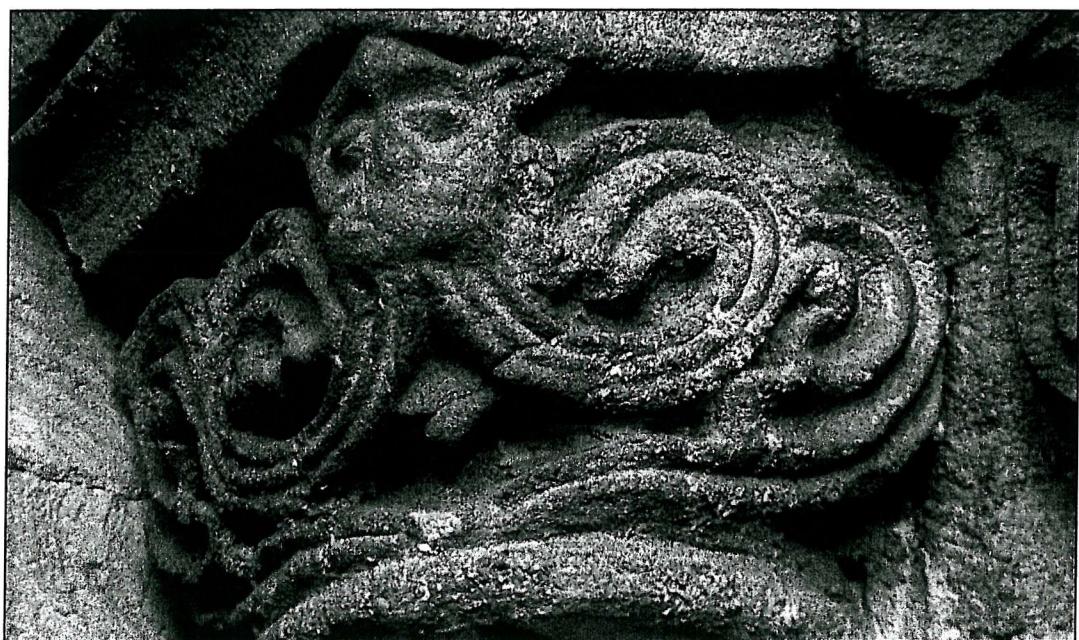
Figure 5. 12 Beast head disgorging foliage, exterior of the south door to the nave at Romsey.

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other way. The focus of attention, even when a figure is represented in its entirety, therefore remains upon the head and the organs of sensory perception. Although the term Green Man is familiar today, figures or heads that disgorge foliage can be animal, or, in some cases, hybrid monsters, as well as human.

The coining of the term Green Man to refer to the image of a foliate head or head disgorging foliage is credited to Lady Raglan, who, in 1939 wrote the first article on the subject (Raglan, 1939). Convinced that the image was 'a man and not a spirit' whose image was taken from real life, Raglan connected it with seasonal folk customs associated with greenery and in particular 'the figure variously known as the Green Man, Jack in the Green, Robin Hood, The King of the May, and the Garland, who is the central figure in the May-Day celebrations throughout Northern and Central Europe' (1939: 45, 50). Cave, in an article on the roof bosses of Ely Cathedral published seven years previously had made similar connections, stating that, in contrast to the 'greater part of the grotesque figures',

> I cannot help thinking that these foliate heads must have had some meaning behind them. The motif is so definite, and so widely spread, both in place and time, that it seems to me to have some significance ... [many] remind me of the Jack-in-the-Green which was still to be seen in London fifty years ago, and one wonders whether they may not, like the Jack-in-the-Green, be some survival from pre-Christian times (1932: 36).

As interest in the imagery began to increase (Cave, 1947), the term Green Man became firmly established, notably by its use throughout Nikolaus Pevsner's *Buildings of England* series but also via other authors (Anderson, 1951: 20-25; Carter and Carter, 1967). It was not until 1978, however, that the first full-length study of the image – Kathleen Basford's *The Green Man* – was published. This marked a departure from previous scholarship in that it considered the origins of the image to lie in classical art, derived from the religious iconography of gods such as Bacchus and Okeanos. Basford is the first to note the ambivalence of the image that is regenerative, like the Jack-in-the-Green, as well as horrific and sinister, an image of death. Reconciling

these extremes, however, led her into problematic attempts to identify "demonic" heads, the existence of which simultaneously questioned the purely benevolent image of Springtime renewal. Inspired by the resurgence of ecological and spiritual interest in the image the poet William Anderson took a more psychological approach to the subject, exploring the idea of the Green Man as an archetype expressive of the relationship between humans and nature (Anderson and Hicks, 1990). Recent publications have either built the Green Man into neo-pagan spirituality (e.g. Matthews, 2001) or returned to explore the folkloric connections and associations in more detail (e.g. Doel and Doel, 2001).

Early examples of Green carvings in the south of England occur in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. In almost all of the examples from this period the architectural medium for the image is the stone capital; images on corbels, although they do exist elsewhere,[4] are absent (Doel and Doel, 2001: 42). Likewise, although tympana do represent Green heads elsewhere (Basford, 1978: pls. 19a-20b) few examples of figures disgorging foliage occur in the region although one of the lions above the south door at Milborne Port may disgorge a fleur-de-lys-like stem (Wood, 1997). This close connection between Green imagery and the decorated capital in the eleventh and twelfth centuries might suggest that these images are closely linked with the development of the Romanesque capital, itself a development of the Roman composite capital. In establishing a tradition of intermingling figures with foliage early on in the medieval period capitals may have initially provided the most appropriate places for Green imagery to be carved.

Romanesque carvings of Green subjects in this area focus upon two main models: the abstract human head disgorging two sprigs of slender or profuse foliage from each corner of the mouth, and the beast head disgorging interlaced or scrolling foliage.

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[4] For example, on the south wall of the nave at Avening (Gloucestershire).

Green beast heads, some with feline characteristics, occur in the north and south chancel aisles, retrochoir, and on either side of the easternmost entrance into the south side of the nave at Romsey Abbey (Fig. 5. 12). The two chancel capitals disgorge abstract interlaced foliage while the retrochoir carving is more akin to the external pair disgorging scroll foliage. Similar heads can be found on capitals framing doorways elsewhere, for example, Newnham and Milborne Port. Despite the effects of weathering, the Newnham carving appears very similar to those on the south door at Romsey, with long pointed ears and slender scrolling foliage spilling from the mouth. At Milborne Port the image disgorges broad leaves, the tips of some ending in fleur-de-lys points. Complete figures, also with foliate tails, appear on two capitals at Romsey in the form of pairs of addorsed leonine quadrupeds (Fig. 5. 5). The tympanum at Milborne Port is carved with a confronted pair of lions, one of which either disgorges foliage or extends a leafy tongue.

Unlike the later medieval period human heads disgorging foliage form a relatively small part of the Green and Foliate repertoire and are generally outnumbered by beast heads, dragons, lions, and animals associated with Tree of Life imagery. This does not, however, mean that there is 'no evidence of ecclesiastical carvings of the Green Man in Britain before the late Norman period' (Doel and Doel, 2001: 37). On the contrary, many of the examples from the south of England can be dated to the late eleventh century and would have been carved soon after the Conquest, possibly by Norman masons.

All the examples of Green human heads of Romanesque date in the area occur inside buildings. At Alton there are two examples carved into the pale limestone of the capitals beneath the late eleventh-century crossing tower (c.1070-1090). Both are similar, appearing as ghostly outlines of staring heads disgorging broad-leaved, drooping foliage from the corners of the mouth.[5] On the carving furthest west

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[5] The proximity of the style of the foliage to wings has led some commentators to interpret these images as 'winged cherub faces' (Couper, 1995: 7). However, winged cherubic heads properly belong to the Renaissance of classical forms and images that began to affect England in the early sixteenth century, nearby examples of which may be found carved on the misericords at Christchurch Priory (Dorset), dating to c.1515.

foliage extends from one side of the mouth only, the other side being taken up by a curved winged serpent that mimics the shape of this vegetation (Fig. 5. 9). Six of the eight carved capitals beneath the crossing tower at Stogursey date to the late eleventh or early twelfth century (c.1090-1105) (Baylé, 1980; Ballard, 1992: 7). Among the various designs here, in which it is not difficult to find representations of potent, regenerative foliage (for example, the Tree of Life with lions and other beasts and confronted foliate wyverns) appears a Green Man with nearly rectangular head, staring eyes and extended tongue (Fig. 5. 13). Two thin stems, each bearing a single leaf, emerge from the corners of the mouth. Even the traditionally abstract volutes mimic the lines of the stems and curled under leaves beneath them, springing from the sides of the head and extending to the top corners of the capital where they form loose, wide spirals. The only carving of a Green Man at Romsey Abbey occurs in the south transept, carved on a capital. Profuse foliage issues from out of the mouth and extends to cover most of the capital (Fig. 5. 14). At the church of St John, Devizes, a Green Man occurs on the southernmost capital of the chancel arch facing into the nave, the head disgorging a single stem from the centre of the mouth that spills into coils below.

Resurrection/Corruption

The significance of the head disgorging foliage in the Romanesque period may be grasped best if viewed within the context of the increasingly corporeal spirituality of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Bodies not only provided the physical medium through which the soul acted, and as such, were readable in terms of spiritual health or sickness but were the template for otherworldly geography. Within such a setting bodily processes such as swallowing and regurgitation could and did acquire profound symbolic importance.

Whilst damnation consisted of eternal dismemberment through the processes of digestion, salvation, just as visceral, was conceived of as regurgitation. The twelfth-

Figure 5. 13 A late eleventh-century capital from Stogursey carved with a human head disgorging foliage from the corners of the mouth.

Figure 5. 14 This mid-twelfth-century capital at Romsey Abbey is rarely visible to the public, located as it is in the south transeptal apse currently in use as a vestry.

century abbess Herrad of Hohenbourg describes Christ's death on the cross as victory over the mouth and stomach of Leviathan (Bynum, 1995: 192). The Harrowing of Hell, the story of Christ's descent into and liberation of souls from the underworld, itself conceived of as the body of a monster, was popular throughout medieval art (Hulme, 1907: lxiv; Babcock, 1990: 411-412). Images of the Harrowing regularly feature Christ forcing open the mouth of the hell-beast and plunging the end of a staff or a cross into its throat in order to induce vomiting.[6] For example, the twelfth-century psalter MS Douce 293 (Bodleian Library, Oxford, fol. 14r, c. 1170-1183) pictures the helpless mouth of the hell-monster spewing forth souls as Christ rams the cross into its gullet (Bynum, 1995: 192 and pl. 13; see Schmidt, 1995 for numerous other examples). Interestingly, the marginal figures surrounding this image include two beasts disgorging lush foliage.

Other popular images of salvation drew upon the story of the prophet Jonah. Jonah, 'swallowed but not digested by the whale, was a symbol of death and resurrection throughout the Middle Ages' and as early as the third century, 'served as a symbol of the risen Christ' (Bynum, 1995: 193). For early Christian art Jonah's story was the most frequently depicted Old Testament scene and often consisted of a three-part cycle that depicted the figure being swallowed by the sea-monster, spewed out of its mouth, and finally at rest under a vine – a sequence corresponding to death, resurrection and eternal bliss in Paradise (Ferguson, 1990: 501). The twelfth to the fourteenth centuries saw similar imagery reiterated in manuscripts, stained glass, pulpit sculptures, and mosaics throughout Europe (Bynum, 1995: 193). The parallels between the medieval hell-mouth and the mouth of the "whale" that swallows and regurgitates the prophet were strengthened further by representations that depict the sea creature as a dragon-like monster with large snout, tapering ears and a long, winding, serpentine tail. This is the *ketos*, a classical beast, which, through

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[6] Wall paintings, for example, that on the west wall of the nave at Chaldon (Surrey) (c. 1200) and sculpted tympana as at Beckford (Worcestershire) and Quenington (Gloucestershire) also depicted the image (Tristram, 1944: 108-109 and pl. 48; Pevsner, 1968: 76; Verey, 1970: 374). At Chaldon the Harrowing occurs as part of a much larger scene illustrating the torments of the underworld, the hell-beast replaced by a recumbent, bound human figure with distorted facial features and surrounded by flames.

mistranslation, became the "great fish" of the King James Bible (*ibid.* 296; see also

Boardman, 1987). The sea-monster, as opposed to the whale, can be found depicted

in medieval art until the twelfth century (Lawrence, 1962: 296). Like the Green Man

Jonah was associated with funerary monuments from an early period, carved into

Roman sarcophagi of the third and fourth centuries as well as painted frequently

throughout the catacombs in Rome (*ibid.* 291-293).[7]

If regurgitation carried beatific connotations then so did exhalation and

correspondences between the words soul, spirit, life, and breath are close in the

Latin, Greek and Hebrew languages (Wood, 2000: 10). Having spoken the world into

existence, God breathes life into Adam, a scene illustrated in the twelfth-century

Hortus Deliciarum (Herrad of Hohenbourg, 1979: fol. 17r, pl. 10, 16; Patai, 1990: 230;

see also Camille, 1985a: 30-31). The breath of life, first given in Eden and forsaken

through the transgression of divine law, was restored by Christ's triumph over death.

Bestiary animals that can represent Christ exude sweet breath such as the panther, or,

like the lion, have life-giving breath with which their stillborn cubs are vivified three

days after birth (Syme, 1999: 164-165). Conversely, breathing problems are associated

with demonic activity (*ibid.*).

Accordingly the mouth as well as the nose were liminal sites in which body and spirit

mingled and conjoined. Breath, in animating the physical body, provided a perpetual

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[7] The earliest known example of the Green Man (i.e. a head emitting foliage) occurs on the
tomb of St Abre in St Hilaire-le-Grand, Poitiers, and dates to c. AD400. The head is ringed
with leaves and two foliage stems grow from each nostril (Anderson and Hicks, 1990: 46, fig.
31). The association between Green heads and tombstones continued throughout the later
Middle Ages as the twelfth-century examples from St Peter's, Conisbrough (Yorkshire), St
Peter's, Northampton (Northamptonshire) and Gundrada's tombstone from the Priory of St
Pancras, Lewes (Sussex) indicate (Pevsner, 1959: 167 and pl. 38; Zarnecki *et al*, 1984: 180-
181, items 142 and 145). Gothic examples can be found on the two castellated stone
candlesticks on a tomb at St Nicholas', Withycombe (Somerset) dating to c. 1300 (Pevsner,
1958b: 349-350; Malet, 1994); the early to mid-fourteenth-century slab at St Giles, Bredon
(Worcestershire) upon which the figure of Christ upon a decidedly tree-like cross with
lopped-off branches is also represented (Pevsner, 1968: 96-97 and pl. 31; Doel and Doel,
2001:49); and the tomb of Gervase Alard, c. 1322, in the chancel of the church of St
Thomas, Winchelsea (East Sussex) (Coldstream, 1994: 156). Basford also notes a number of
examples (1978: 21, also pls. 52a and b) and the tomb of Louis de France (d. 1260) in the

reminder of the presence of the supernatural power by which humanity lived. Regurgitation could likewise evoke intensely spiritual ideas, spiralling around the themes of renewal and resurrection.

Foliage might inspire similar reflections. Drawn from classical and oriental sources, the vine had been incorporated into Christian art from an early period, initially as a simple scroll, later inhabited by animals and birds. The Trees of the Paradise garden called forth associations between foliage, Christ, and the resurrection. As it has been shown images of the Tree of Life are frequent throughout Romanesque architectural sculpture and often accompanied by particular animals. Christ's death upon the cross, which had made possible the return to Paradise, cemented further the arboreal and foliate with the afterlife – indeed, the link between the cross and the tree was made in the very first sermons that the apostles preached and persisted throughout the Middle Ages (Wood, 2000: 9; Doel and Doel, 2001: 57-63). Deciduous foliage rather than evergreen not only combined the themes of death and resurrection but located them seasonally, the Easter celebrations made all the more potent symbolically by the return of vegetation. The anonymous author of the treatise "Pictor in Carmine" suggests the use of foliage as a motif to convey ideas of resurrection for these reasons (James, 1951: 166) while twelfth-century monastic writers commonly described the soul's growth toward God in this life, and after, 'as flowering or germination' (Bynum, 1995: 157).

Flanking the Tree of Life and/or often partially foliate themselves, serpentine and leonine creatures were closely connected with foliage and its potential meanings. These include griffins (composite eagle/lion) and all forms of dragons, in particular, wyverns. Feline creatures such as the lion and the panther have already been mentioned in connection with the resurrective power of Christ. Less well known, perhaps, is that the serpent and dragon could enjoy similar status and were not 'always diabolical' representations of the devil as many writers believe (for example, Harte, 2001: 12; Grössinger, 1997b: 138). Bestiaries had incorporated much classical

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Abbey Church of St.-Denis bears foliate heads on the corners of the slab (Panofsky, 1964: pl.

animal lore around which the Christian author(s) worked their moralizations and in the Roman world snakes had had a predominantly positive reputation, associated with fertility, healing, and prophecy, as well as being regarded as the beneficent spirits of the dead (Wheatcroft, 1999: 144-145). Moreover, the *Physiologus*, the core of all later bestiaries, associated the serpentine ability to shed old skin with the physical and spiritual rejuvenation brought into the world by Christ (*ibid.* 143). The wyvern, as well as the cross, appears on Norman shields in the Bayeux Tapestry suggesting that 'the former was thought of in a favourable light as a symbol of strength and power' (Wood, 1997: 5). Lesley Kordecki's study of dragons in the medieval period notes the progressive narrowing of an essentially polysemous symbol, the end result of which was, by the later period, the equation of dragon with devil (1980: 6). Although both leonine and serpentine forms carried negative as well as positive associations in Christian animal lore, the frequent association of both with the Tree of Life and other vegetal imagery suggests that in these cases the predominant ideas concerned resurrection, strength, and renewal, rather than any diabolical motives.

This may be substantiated by the two most common activities in which these creatures engage – curving the tail up between the rear legs, and biting the tail. In the former, common to leonine figures, the tail itself often sprouts into foliage (e.g. Romsey) making the connection explicit. The aforementioned etymological association in Latin between tail and penis suggests that these poses were not insignificant, linking the sprouting of foliage to the fecund, regenerative power of an animal itself symbolically close to Christ. The dragon biting its tail is an ancient image connected with concepts of immortality (Hoult, 1987: 51-52; Cooper, 1978: 123-124, "Ouroboros"), and beasts connected with Tree of Life imagery may also bite their tails, such as the equine pair at Alton. Although now singular, the voussoir reset into the exterior of the west wall of the nave at Binstead depicting a horse biting its tail, may have once been associated with other images suggestive of resurrection and immortality. The appearance of the fleur-de-lys, sacred to Mary, in place of foliage on the tails of leonine creatures evokes further connections between Christian figures

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and the themes of renewal and eternal life evoked by foliage (Pritchard, 1967: 175-76).

Most of the Romanesque examples of foliate creatures and Green Men occur in highly visible locations. These images were meant to be seen and thought about, and by a variety of audiences. Tympana, carved and set above doorways, are of all architectural carvings the easiest to see, not only in physiological terms (close to head height, plenty of daylight) but also in terms of social use of space (visible to anyone upon entering the church, not set in a restricted area). The same applies to any carved capitals supporting the arch of the entrance door. Sites that possess Tree of Life, Green heads, foliate, serpentine and/or leonine creatures in these locations are numerous (see above), and would have served to reiterate the idea of resurrection through their frequent use, as well as perhaps identify the possibility of resurrection with entering the church. At Romsey Abbey the former doorway from the cloister into the church has four capitals, two of which are carved with Green feline heads. It is possible that such associations persisted through to the late medieval period, for Lacock Abbey possesses a number of Green heads carved into the roof bosses of the north cloister walk, which would have been the one closest to the church. These bosses are low to the ground (no higher than fifteen feet) and, even in the gloom of the cloister, generally easy to see.

Inside the church, despite its appearance on capitals in the semi-secular space of the nave (e.g. Christchurch Priory; Combe St Nicholas), heads disgorging foliage as well as foliate creatures occur frequently in those areas of the church restricted to the clergy. At Romsey Abbey all the Green and foliate carvings are in the restricted spaces of the chancel, retrochoir, south transept, and the south door that led from the cloister to the eastern end of the nave. Bearing in mind selective survival and different building and restoration programmes this is significant for it shows that these images were primarily intended for an audience of educated religious women. Moreover, they appear to demarcate the space used solely by the nuns: two Green feline heads appear on the capital clusters that separate transepts from chancel aisles, one in the north aisle, one in the south; on the capitals of the retrochoir another

Green feline head, two pairs of addorsed lions with foliate tails (who also disgorge foliage), and a pair of intertwined wyverns; in the south transept another pair of intertwined wyverns and a Green Man. Today, the Lady chapel in the retrochoir no longer exists, but the concentration of such imagery around the entrances to it remains. In parish and collegiate churches similar images occur in locations that serve to frame the chancel area such as crossing towers or chancel arches as if strengthening the association between the ritual activities of the clergy and the idea of resurrection (crossing towers at Alton and Stogursey; the chancel arch capital carved on the side that faces into the nave at St John's, Devizes). The last example is placed in a prominent location and would have been visible to the lay congregation.

The close association between vegetal imagery and the resurrection into eternal life offered by the instrument of God's will on earth, in the first instance Christ, later, the Church, return us to the idea of the physical building as a space between material and numinous realities. The prime navigators through this ambiguous territory were of course the clergy whose status as mediators between humans and the divine world may have benefited from the associations made by foliate imagery.

Later Medieval Carvings

Foliate Creatures

The association of dragons with foliage continues through to the late medieval period. Early misericords are often decorated with 'lace-like combinations of dragons and foliage', the choir at Christchurch Priory providing a good example (Grössinger, 1975: 97). Here, two intertwined wyverns with slender bodies bite each other's forelimb and wing whilst their scrolling tails dissolve into foliage (Fig. 5. 15). The carving dates to c. 1220. Similar images may also be found carved on roof bosses at Bishop's Cannings (Wiltshire) and Milton Abbas (Dorset) (Figs 5. 16 and 5. 17). At the latter, the bodies of the dragons are so slender it is easy to miss them completely,

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Figure 5. 15 Two wyverns with foliate tails carved on an early thirteenth-century misericord at Christchurch Priory. The association of dragons with vegetation, already established in the Romanesque period, becomes conventionalised in later architectural carvings that present dragons with slender bodies and swirling tails of foliage (see also Figs 5. 16 and 5. 17).

Figure 5. 16 Roof boss in the crossing tower at Bishop's Cannings carved with a swirling worm-type dragon whose body becomes foliage.

Figure 5. 17 Roof boss in the chancel at Milton Abbas. This design has obvious parallels with the misericord at Christchurch Priory (Fig. 5. 15).

Figure 5. 18 A worm-type dragon whose body terminates in leaves carved on a fifteenth-century roof boss in the cloister at Lacock Abbey, Wiltshire.

Figure 5. 19 Two intertwined dragons amid foliage at Lacock Abbey (the head of the second dragon appears on the opposite side of the boss). Although carved in the later medieval period, there is much in common with the Romanesque image illustrated in Fig. 5. 10.

appearing at a distance little different from plant stems. At Lacock Abbey a number of fifteenth-century roof bosses reiterate the connection (see, for example, Figs 5. 18 and 5. 19).

In many respects the late medieval foliate dragons continue on from Romanesque traditions that associated dragons with vegetation. There are differences, however, not so much with the form of the dragon itself but rather with the contexts in which the foliage appears. The two intertwined dragons at Lacock do not disgorge foliage but devour it feverishly; another dragon plays the harp. Both images question the potentially benevolent associations previously assumed by the Romanesque foliate dragon, entering the image into the complex fields of associations conjured by images of devouring (see chapter 6) and musicianship respectively. A further boss at Lacock features a hybrid human/animal creature with a foliate tail curved tightly up through the rear legs. The head is that of a woman wearing a headdress, the body that of a quadruped. Again, the connotations appear satiric.

Green Birds

Birds disgorging foliage or emitting it from other parts of the body occur on the roof bosses at Bishop's Cannings and Lacock Abbey, both in Wiltshire (Figs 5. 20 and 5. 21). Birds are closely associated with foliage in the Romanesque period, commonly appearing among the branches of the Tree of Life as the carved tympana at Stoke-sub-Hamdon and Little Langford attest (Allen, 1887: 255; Powell, 1909) (Figs 5. 22 and 5. 23). In the fourteenth-century, birds can appear upon grave slabs such as that inside the church of St Giles, Bredon (Worcestershire), accompanying the donors reborn into immortal life (see footnote 7 above for references). Due to their associations with Tree of Life imagery birds in such contexts are likely to have connoted resurrection and birds disgorging foliage might be seen to substantiate such an idea. However, like the foliate dragons, the potential associations of the imagery in this period are not so clear-cut, one of the images at Lacock Abbey presenting a bird emitting foliage from its anus.

Figure 5. 20 Roof boss in the crossing tower at Bishop's Cannings carved with two birds disgorging foliage. The carving dates to the first half of the thirteenth century.

Figure 5. 21 Two birds disgorge foliage on a fifteenth-century roof boss at Lacock Abbey.

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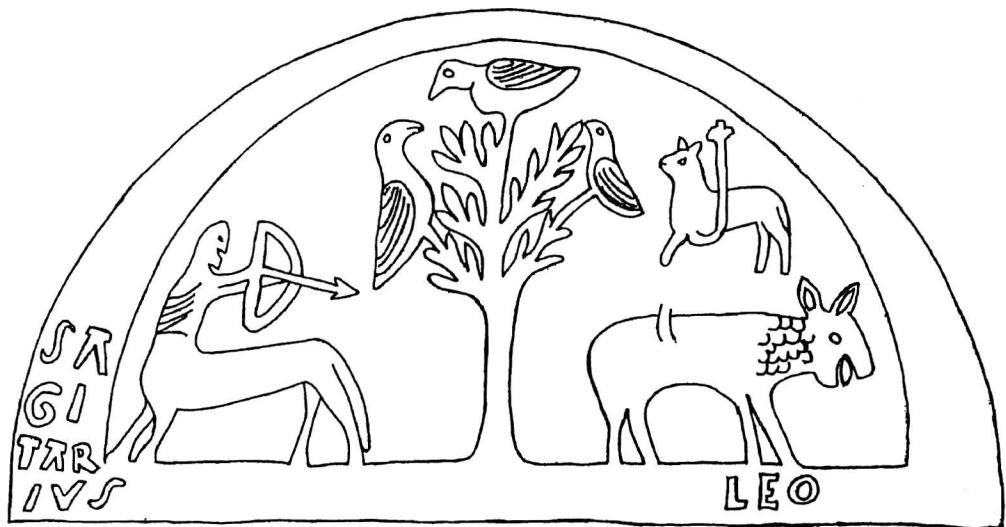
Figure 5. 22 The tympanum above the north door at Stoke sub Hamdon (Somerset). Three birds settle on the central Tree, while the lion and centaur are identified with their respective zodiacal signs.

Figure 5. 23 The tympanum above the south door at little Langford (Wiltshire). To the right of the carving a sprawling Tree of Life supports three birds, while on the left a cleric raises his hand in a gesture of blessing.

Green Monsters

The appearance of monstrous figures disgorging greenery form the mouth is a late medieval development. Composite animals and composite human/animals are both featured in this way. At Stinsford (Dorset) a gargoyle on the southwest corner of the south aisle is carved into a frowning head from whose open mouth sprout two thin plant stems, each of which bursts into profuse leafy foliage (Fig. 5. 24). Thick wavy hair crowns the head as well as appearing from the neck. The church of St Mary, Devizes, features a similar carving on the south-east corner of the south aisle, only without any suggestion of human features (Fig. 5. 25). The gargoyle represents the foreparts of a composite creature with the head and mane of a lion, membranous wings, and shaggy forelimbs. Creeping out of each side of the open mouth are strands of foliage, which, although weathered like the rest of the sculpture are nonetheless easily visible. Apart from leonine characteristics, these fearsome, unnameable creatures disgorging foliage share little with any Romanesque antecedents.

Two further carvings take the disgorging image into new terrain. A roof boss in the north aisle at Steeple Langford (Wiltshire) depicts the contorted body of a dog amongst foliage, from whose snout issues a thick stem that divides and curls back around the figure (Fig. 5. 26). The dog wears a woman's headdress. More radical still, although stylistically very similar, is the composite mermaid figure carved on a roof boss in the north cloister walk at Lacock Abbey (Fig. 5. 27). The hybridity of the mermaid is enhanced by the addition of a beast's head with pointed ears and large eyes through whose snout a long tendril emerges, dividing into two stems at the edge of the boss. That both sequences of images possess other satirical, misogynist figures (amongst the other seven bosses at Steeple Langford there is a harpy, whilst the cloister at Lacock contains two other mermaids as well as at least one harpy) is significant and may suggest that these two Green female creatures share their associations (see chapter 8 for further discussion of sirens).

Figure 5. 24 Late medieval gargoyle at Stinsford in Dorset. Foliage grows from the mouth to become profuse on each side of the head.

Figure 5. 25 Fifteenth-century gargoyle on the exterior of St Mary's, Devizes, carved as a hybrid beast with membranous wings. Foliage hangs from the sides of the mouth.

Figure 5. 26 Wooden roof boss in the north aisle at Steeple Langford (Wiltshire) representing a dog disgorging thin stems that end in leaves.

Figure 5. 27 An unusual mermaid composition – beast headed and disgorging thin strands of foliage in a similar manner to Fig. 5. 26. This example comes from the cloisters at Lacock Abbey, not far from Steeple Langford, whose carving predates this mermaid by a century.

Green Men

In the later Middle Ages the number of Green Man images increase substantially. Apart from the small heads at Broad Chalke (Wiltshire) and Winchester Cathedral, few occur on the exterior of buildings. By this period the exterior of churches and cathedrals tend toward the display of predominantly hybrid monster sculptures in the form of gargoyles and grotesques. In contrast, nave interiors begin to crowd with human heads as the corbel sequences of alternate bishops and kings at Calne, Wilsford, and Bishop's Cannings, and fashionably attired laity at Alton, Holybourne and Netheravon attest.

In this period human heads disgorging foliage occur on every internal architectural feature that bears carving – capitals, corbels, misericords, stalls, and roof bosses. Indeed, it is difficult to perceive any particular impetus behind their distribution for no part of the inside of religious buildings in this period appears undisturbed by their presence.

The capital bands on the nave arcades at Upwey (Dorset), Halse, Stogumber (Somerset) (Fig. 5. 28), and Ottery St Mary (Devon), all provide examples. At Upwey only the responds of the arcades bear heads, the freestanding capitals being carved with foliate designs only. Of the three remaining responds only one bears a human head that disgorges greenery, the other two carved with heads among foliage. A similar pattern is apparent at Halse. Here, only the responds of the north nave arcade are carved with Green heads, the freestanding columns crowned with abstract designs. The head furthest west appears to sprout feathery stems from the forehead while the image furthest east, facing into the nave, issues similar stems from each side of the mouth as well as sticking out the tongue. Stogumber follows a similar pattern, the capital band to the respond of the north nave arcade carved with a head disgorging rich foliage while the tops of the columns of the same arcade in the nave are carved only with foliate designs. In these examples disgorging heads do not appear to be carved randomly, but are located following a particular pattern, i.e. at

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those points where the arcade began or ended. Such positioning, however, is not always the case, as the nave arcades at Ottery St Mary substantiate.

Corbels carved with Green human heads are commonly found in the nave. At Holybourne in Hampshire and Mappowder in Dorset the corbels are set into the south-east corner of the nave, at its point of connection with the chancel, and each figure is angled to look into the body of the nave itself (Figs 5. 29 and 5. 30). The figure at Alton, set into the north-east corner of the chancel is likewise angled at forty-five degrees. The Alton and Holybourne corbel sequences appear to have been carved by the same group of masons who were active in the locality around 1400 for the Green Men in each are very similar, disgorging two wreath-like stems that grow up each side of the faces. The Mappowder carving issues broad-leaved foliage from each nostril and is likely to have supported a statue or some other feature. Other examples of Green Men supporting figurative images may be found in the nave at Exeter Cathedral on the corbels in the spandrels of the arcading, while outside the door connecting the church to the former cloister at Romsey Abbey there is a single heavily weathered corbel of a male head upon which traces of foliage issuing from the mouth and forehead are just discernible.

Roof bosses carved with the image occur at Dorchester and Sherborne Abbey (Dorset), and Lacock Abbey and Mere (Wiltshire). Further west, Exeter Cathedral contains numerous examples. At Dorchester the carvings appear in the nave and north nave aisle; at Sherborne, at the most eastern and central point of the nave. The latter, despite its prominent position in an unrestricted part of the church is nevertheless difficult to see – as all the bosses at Sherborne are – due to the great height of the nave roof. At Mere the carvings appear in the roof of the Bettesthorne chapel on the south side of the chancel (c. 1330) and would have therefore been viewed by a clerical, or wealthy lay audience only. Lacock Abbey presents a similar scenario with its cloister bosses. Indeed, the carving of Green Man images in restricted parts of the church is by no means uncommon, as the stallwork and misericords in the choir at Winchester Cathedral attest.

Figure 5. 28 Disgorging head carved on a fifteenth-century capital at Stogumber (Somerset). Profuse foliage extends from the mouth to fill the available space.

Figure 5. 29 Green Man in the south east corner of the nave at Holybourne in Hampshire. Foliage grows from the mouth in two strands to form a wreath-like frame for the face.

Figure 5. 30 Head emitting foliage from the nostrils, carved on a corbel at Mappowder in Dorset. The corbel, like 5. 29 above, would have been visible to the congregation in the nave and may have been used to support the rood loft structure.

Corruption/Resurrection

Although I have discussed the foliage disgorgers and partially vegetal beasts of Romanesque date largely in terms of their power to signify concepts relating to salvation and resurrection it must not be forgotten that it was death that made such concepts vital in the first place. These are images suited to funerary contexts, as their presence on high status tombs throughout the medieval period testifies. But whereas the typically abstract, dispassionately gazing Romanesque heads appear distinctly other than human, perhaps hinting at the invariability of the afterlife, the later medieval examples foreground the physicality of death. Many give the impression of a corpse in advanced stages of decay. At Ottery St Mary (Devon), a corbel in the chancel depicts a head with foliage issuing out of the sides of the mouth, nostrils and eyes. Elsewhere in Devon, examples of cadaverous heads with foliage emerging from eyes and mouth occur on bosses at South Tawton, Sampford Courtenay and Spreyton (Basford, 1978: pls. 71b-75b; Doel and Doel, 2001: 40, 24).

Late medieval religious sensibilities were attuned to images of suffering. By the fourteenth century, depictions of the dying Christ, his broken body a mass of bleeding wounds, began to outnumber representations of the majestic Christ of resurrection and judgement (Ross, 1997). Churchgoers were surrounded by vivid representations of the Passion in a number of media including wall-paintings, stained glass, and rood sculpture. Memorials upon which the deceased was represented as a decomposing corpse, half-digested by worms, also gained in popularity during the same century (Panofsky, 1964: 64 and pls. 258-263; Hadley, 2001: fig. 77) and images of the Green Man, by this time an important part of the repertoire of Christian carving, mirrored these developments. The Doel's comment upon the significance of the image flourishing 'in ecclesiastical buildings after the Black Death' (2001: 37), the epidemic that, even for the death-conscious Middle Ages would have brought the physicality and suffering of dying into immediate focus. As an image powerfully evocative of resurrection and immortality the increase of Green Man carvings in far

more human guise than their Romanesque predecessors, like contemporary images of Christ, attest to the agonies of the world at the same time as they point beyond it.

Consequently, wherever the Green Man appears we must be aware of the presence of an inexplicable other, whether this is the otherness of dying to this world to be reborn in another, of the familiar yet mysterious force that animates all life, or of other uncharted realms. The image is itself liminal, evocative of processes unknown and unknowable, located at the outermost edges of experience.

Green is a predominant colour in some medieval accounts of otherworldly beings. In the reign of Henry II, whilst out cutting reeds for thatching, the servant Richard, of North Sunderland in Northumberland, encountered three handsome youths not only clad in green but who rode green horses. One of them pulled Richard onto the horse he was riding and carried him off to a beautiful mansion crowded with people, presided over by a king. Richard, having declined all offers of food and drink, was eventually returned to the spot from which he had been taken (Bartlett, 2000: 686-687). One of the more famous stories recounts how, at the mouth of a cave near Woolpit in Suffolk, the local inhabitants found two green children who spoke an incomprehensible language. 'Brought to the house of a neighbouring knight, the children lived on a diet of beans, but the boy soon pined away and died. His sister, however, throve. As she grew accustomed to a more varied diet, her skin turned from green to pink, she learned to speak English, and was baptized' (*ibid.* 688). All the inhabitants of the region from where she and her brother had come were green, she related, and their world was one lit not by sunlight but by a kind of twilight glow. Hearing the ringing of bells whilst tending their flocks, they had followed the sound until it brought them out of the cave where they had been found, 'almost unconscious from the brightness of the sun and the warmth of the air' (*ibid.*).

Other green figures are manifest in medieval literature. Towards the end of the fourteenth century an unknown author in Northwest England composed the poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.* The Green Knight, a giant, impressive figure, appears upon a green horse at Arthur's court during the midwinter festivities with a challenge

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– a game of beheading. In accepting the challenge Gawain must behead the giant knight who will return in a year and a day to return the favour. The poem is rich with symbolism to suit the greenness of the knight, the action pivoting around the liminal times of the year's turning as well as taking place in ambiguous locations (Doel and Doel, 2001: 65-83). Although any identification of the Knight with the Green Man of ecclesiastical carvings would be tenuous at best it is hard to deny that the most powerful elements in the poem, like the carvings, concern 'the celebration of the life-force and promise of renewal' (*ibid.* 82). At the same time, the associations of the colour green with other realms and inbetween times lent it a dangerous amorality. The devil in Chaucer's Friar's Tale, for example, wears green so as not to cause alarm among the beasts he is pursuing in the forest (Robertson, 1954: 470-472).

The liminal nature of greenness is present in its visual representations. On Romanesque tympana, feline heads disgorging vegetation can appear with Christ in majesty, their foliage often extending around the edges of the semi-circular sculptural field and thereby containing the imagery. This position lends further credence to the liminality of the image as it provides a clear boundary between the representation of Christological space and the human world of the viewer of the tympanum (see Basford, 1978: pls. 19a, 20a, 20b for examples). In later periods the Green Man occurs with other sacred figures. Lady Raglan puzzled over the appearance of a crowned Green Man in a stained glass window at St Mary Redcliffe (Bristol), concluding that the image, placed above the sun and below the figure of Mary, must have been 'equally venerable with the Virgin' to the priests who ordered it (1939: 56). In the nave at Exeter Cathedral, corbels supporting carvings of angelic and sacred figures such as the Virgin and child are carved with Green Men. It is possible that similarly carved corbels at Mappowder and Romsey Abbey, the former in the nave, the latter outside the door from the cloister to the nave, may have supported freestanding statues of similar sacred figures. The threshold status of the Green Man may have called attention to the sanctity of the figures with which it was associated, and in the process highlighted the fact that these were highly revered spiritual figures.

However, as is becoming clear, in the medieval period other worlds were conceived of as potentially dangerous spaces haunted by faery folk, saints and demons alike. If green could be the colour of the devil then the mutability of foliage, its restless growth and decay, also mirrored the unceasingly changeable physical world and its temptations. From the twelfth century onwards redemption was increasingly conceived of as 'triumph over fragmentation, digestion and rot – over the natural process itself' (Bynum, 1995: 186). Similarly, if bodily integrity provided the image of spiritual and moral integrity then disintegration and fragmentation could be perceived to mirror spiritual and moral corruption. The 'living cadaver' of the leper's body was a particularly useful image with which to make this connection, for example, 'because its disease, and the disease of original sin, were seen as sexually transmitted' (*ibid.* 327, n31). Foliage, in its seasonal alterity and growth via division and partition was implicated.[8] The Hawthorn, often disgorged by Green Men, for example that at Sutton Benger (Wiltshire), was perceived by the Church as the tree of desire, capable of arousing lust (Anderson and Hicks, 1990: 120). It is perhaps in such a context that the images of the mermaid disgorging foliage at Lacock Abbey, and the dog wearing a woman's headdress and disgorging foliage at Steeple Langford, may be more fully understood. The mermaid or siren was commonly associated with prostitution by medieval writers while other satirical figures such as harpies and monstrous women could be depicted wearing fashionable headdresses (Hassig, 1999b: 79-82; see also chapter 8). The hybrid body of the mermaid, however, may have been viewed as a particularly appropriate one with which to associate the disgorging of foliage carrying as it did connotations of supernatural danger as well as benevolent powers, and thereby locating the image in a distinctly other zone in which ambiguity, and therefore, the sacred, was made manifest.

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[8] Rita Wood suggests that feline heads disgorging asymmetrical foliage in Romanesque art are images of evil on this basis (2000: 12).

Conclusion

Today the Green Man appears as a figurehead for neo-pagan spirituality, an image through which the dynamic forces of nature and humanity may be seen to merge and sustain each other in a symbiotic, cyclical, and compassionate embrace (Hicks, 1997, 2000; Harding 1998b). Although such contemporaneity is vivid testament to the strength and adaptability of the image it is unlikely that medieval people would have understood it in exactly the same way. Redolent with concepts of resurrection and renewal the disgorger of foliage in the Romanesque period generally accompanied sacred figures or creatures associated with them, such as the lion and the dragon. The Tree of Life and other foliage in certain contexts also pointed towards the afterlife made possible by the incarnation and death of Christ and these connections persisted throughout the later medieval period. Indeed the image is closely related to medieval concerns with the resurrection of the body and found favourable locations on tombs from the twelfth through to the fifteenth centuries.

Whereas Romanesque imagery tended towards abstraction, however, later medieval Green Men do not shrink from the presentation of physical suffering and decay. Located in such liminal territory, uniting both life and death, the image is capable of pointing toward the glory of the afterlife as well as highlighting the pain of the physical world. Closely related is the cessation of carvings of feline heads disgorging foliage, once prominent in the Romanesque period, as the focus shifts towards representations of individual humans. Creatures that had traditionally been associated with greenery – the lion and the serpent/dragon – now contribute more to the monstrous forms that gather around the edges of buildings.

The ambiguity of the image, collapsing the themes of resurrection and corruption and focussing upon the dangerously unstable zones of the mouth and other openings, together with its associations with the fecund, mutable vegetable world all draw attention to the ephemerality of the body. As cadaver or disgorger, the human face distorts with the force of issuing stems, dissolving the human among the leaves.

Organic processes such as eating, in which substances were absorbed into one's body, were mysterious and threatening for similar reasons, breaking down the boundaries between self and other, inside and outside (Bynum, 1995: 136). In general, 'green symbolises growth, and growth symbolism can refer to apparently irreconcilable positive and negative feelings and emotions' (Hutchings, 1997: 61).

Such dramatic visualization of the body – the familiar made strange, the strange as familiar – is wholly grotesque, serving as a forceful reminder of the instability and interconnectedness of life. For the later medieval period in particular, the "gaps" between human and other, the points at which the human confronted the otherness of the divine and diabolic, were firmly located in and explored through the physical body. Within these gaps appeared the image of the Green Man, alchemically blending together otherworldly ecstasy with physical suffering.

Devouring and Distorted Mouths

Introduction

Green Men would appear to substantiate Bakhtin's statement that the mouth is 'the most important of all human features for the grotesque' (Bakhtin, 1984: 317). In this chapter I wish to continue to explore those carvings in which the mouth features heavily, but whereas the previous chapter took disgorging or regurgitation as its main theme the first part of this one will look at its opposite – devouring. The second part will then turn to look at figurative carvings characterized by a distorted mouth, exemplified by mouth-puller carvings but also tongue-extenders and grimacing heads.

The Devouring Mouth

The act of devouring is represented in many ways in medieval carvings. I have selected four broad groups of images from among the material in the region in order to present a case for a deep-rooted and long-lasting tradition of carving such images, yet one in which adaptation and diversity thrived. These are: biting beast heads, Gothic giants, animals eating other animals, and humans in the mouths of monsters.

Romanesque corbels frequently depict beast heads chewing or biting upon something such as a stick, the ends of which protrude from each side of the mouth. Three examples from the corbel-table at Studland are suggestive of such activity although all have been described differently by Lundgren and Thurlby who believe that the protrusions in these cases are either short tusks or stylized human heads, the latter representing 'the devouring of human souls' (1999: 4). This may be the case,

although all images bear close similarities to other carved corbels and capitals in the region that appear to represent beast heads biting or chewing upon a stick, as at Maiden Newton (Dorset) and Englishcombe (Somerset), the former a horse head, the latter a capital carved with a human-animal head. At St John's, Devizes, one of the beast heads in the corbel-table on the north side of the chancel bites upon a length of rope.

During the later medieval period a variation upon this stick-biting theme occurs at a number of locations in Wiltshire in carvings that represent human heads gnawing a bone or holding a bone between the teeth. Examples of the latter may be found on the exterior of the south side of the tower at Broad Chalke and in the south transept at Amesbury, both carvings dating to the fifteenth century (Fig. 6. 1a). Also in the south transept at Amesbury is a wall-plate sculpture of a monster devouring a human head-first, the victim gripped at the wrists by the beast's hands (Fig. 6. 1b), an image which can be also be found with minor variations as a grotesque on the west face of the tower at Brent Knoll. Sheridan and Ross have published a picture of the Amesbury devourer and suggest that it represents a giant (1975: 30), an assertion substantiated in part by a carving at nearby Melksham in Wiltshire. Here, on the exterior south side of the nave is a fifteenth-century window around which occur three carvings – two as label-stops to the hood-mould and one above the apex of the arch as a grotesque. The label stops are carved with animals – a fox running with a dead goose held in its mouth by the neck and a dog among birds – but the carving sited above the apex is that of a human figure with rotund belly and pointed teeth gnawing a large bone, an image that may well represent a giant.

The devouring theme continues in those carvings that represent animals being eaten by or appearing inside the mouths of other animals; fearsome predatory animals or birds such as lions, foxes and eagles are commonly represented in such a manner. Amongst the Romanesque corbels on the exterior north side of the nave at Romsey, for example, there is a feline beast head in whose open mouth appears a rodent in
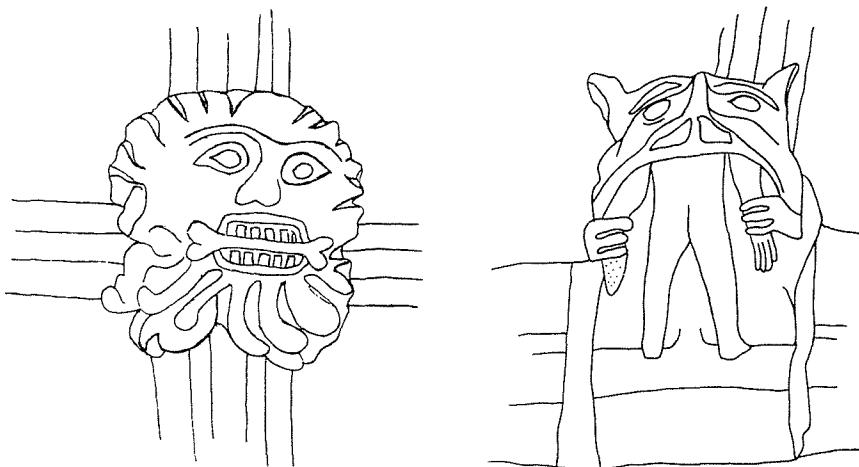
Figure 6. 1 (a and b) Two carvings from the fifteenth-century wooden roof in the south-transept at Amesbury (Wiltshire). On the left (6. 1a) a human head grips a bone between the teeth; on the right (6. 1b) a humanoid monster devours a human body head first.

profile (Fig. 6. 2a) while on the north side of the nave at Lullington another Romanesque corbel carved with a feline head appears to devour or disgorge five bird heads or serpents (Fig. 6. 2b). The devouring animal is easily found throughout later medieval architectural sculpture too, whether in the form of the fox with a goose in its mouth, typically held by the neck as at Melksham and among the fifteenth-century roof bosses at Lacock Abbey; as a lion attacking other creatures, such as the suckling sow carved on a fourteenth-century boss in the south nave aisle at Winchester Cathedral (Cave, 1934: 50), or in other combinations of predator and prey.

Just as common are images that depict human figures in the mouths of animals or monsters. The Romanesque corbels at Romsey Abbey present a number of examples of such carvings among the corbels on the exterior of the transepts, chancel and nave aisles. All are based upon a beast head with its mouth open wide, within which appears either an upright human head or a full figure in a horizontal position. Four corbels may be found here carved with such designs, two with human heads and two with human figures, one of which has arms crossed at the wrists (Figs 6. 3a-b). A variant upon this theme may be found at St John's, Devizes, where a corbel on the

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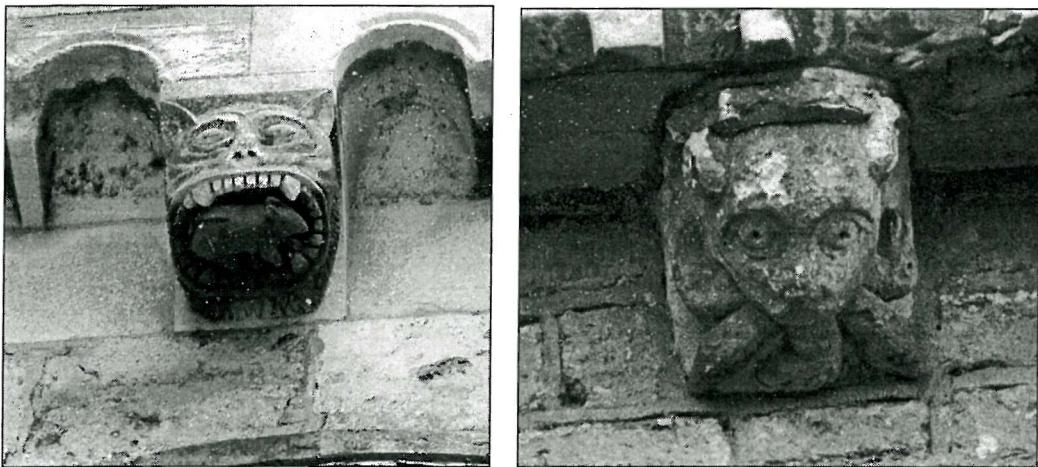
Figure 6. 2 (a and b) Romanesque beast heads with animals in the mouth. On the left (6. 2a) a head from Romsey Abbey carved with a rodent in its jaws; on the right (6. 2b) a carving from Lullington with five bird's heads protruding from the creature's jaws.
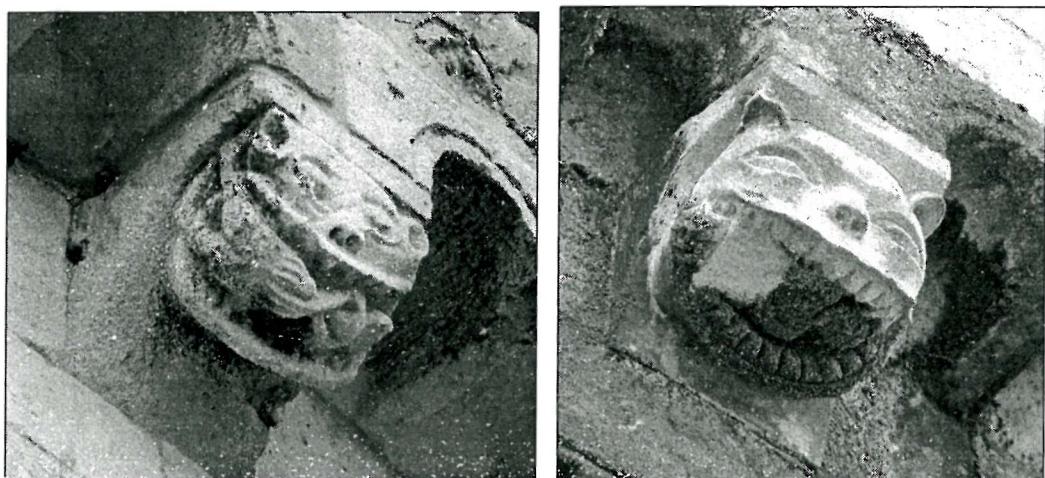
Figure 6. 3 (a and b) Romanesque corbels from Romsey Abbey carved with beast heads in whose jaws appear human figures. The image on the left (6. 3a) appears on the south transept; the figure on the right (6. 3b) is located on the north transept.

Figure 6. 4 A capital from the south choir aisle at Romsey Abbey. On the right appears a human figure on all fours; on the left, a leonine head devours a figure head first – only the legs are still visible.

north side of the chancel portrays an embracing couple within a cavernous beast mouth.

Whilst these images represent figures that are already located within the mouths of beasts, other medieval carvings depict figures entering the mouth or in the process of being eaten. Two features characterize these images. First, the human figure enters the mouth head-first and is therefore often depicted only from the waist down. Second, the figure may be held by the monster as it closes its jaws over the victim's head and upper body. I have already illustrated an example from Amesbury (Fig. 6. 1b); further examples can be found at Romsey Abbey, Bishop's Cannings and Brent Knoll. The carving at Romsey occurs on a mid-twelfth-century capital in the south chancel aisle and depicts the lower part of a tunic-clad figure falling into the jaws of a gaping leonine head (Fig. 6. 4). The images from Amesbury and Brent Knoll, the latter carved in the round as a grotesque on the west face of the west tower, both represent a monstrous creature with leonine or generic beast features (e.g. shaggy hair/mane, claws, animal ears) as well as an oversized head, holding a human by the arms or wrists while the mouth closes over the victim's head and upper body. These two carvings appear in late fifteenth-century contexts.

In addition to leonine monsters devouring human figures, the thirteenth-century roof boss beneath the crossing tower at Bishop's Cannings shows a dragon in the same role (Fig. 6. 5). Here the unfortunate human is held in the dragon's talons while the beast bites into the head. On the southwest corner of the nave at St Cyriac's, Lacock, a quadrupedal beast with a tail and dragon-like snout but lacking wings appears chained to the church, eating a succession of what may have been human figures (Fig. 6. 6). However, weathering has unfortunately eroded this part of the image beyond recognition and accordingly any identification of human forms must remain conjectural.

In many of these images the lion and the dragon (and leonine and serpentine features) appear to be used in similar ways in order to articulate a fearsome and dangerous energy. This connection between the two creatures and their derivatives

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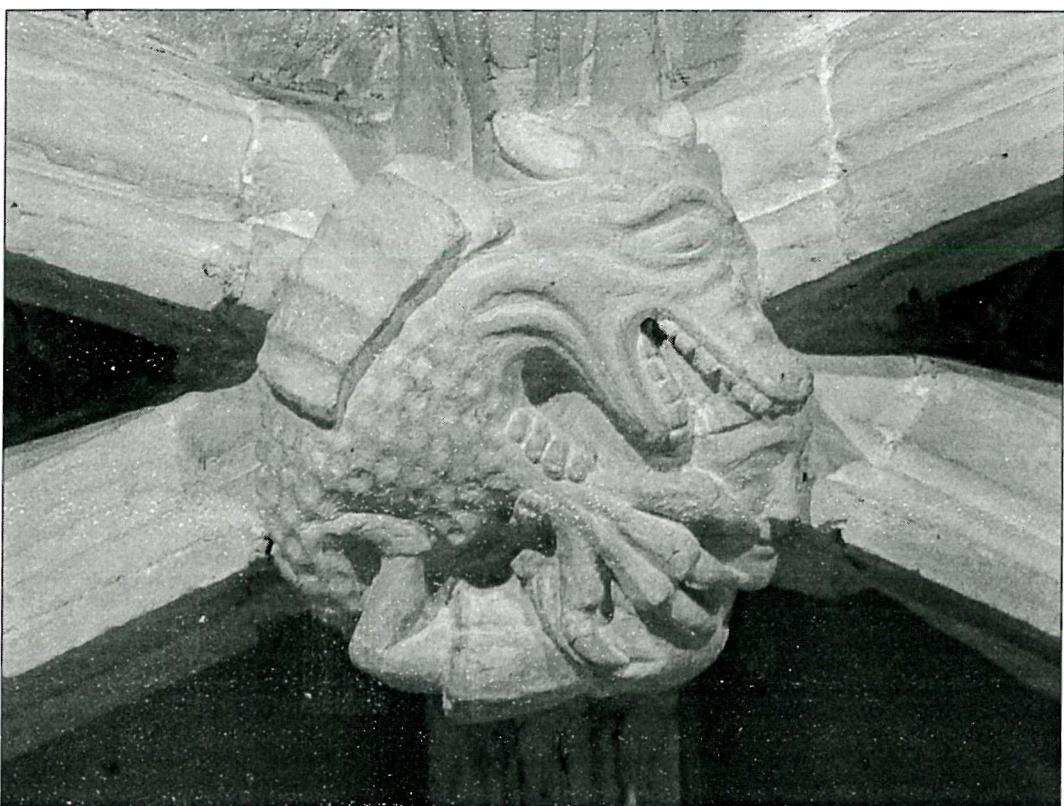
Figure 6. 5 A dragon devouring a human figure head first, carved on one of the thirteenth-century roof bosses in the tower crossing at Bishop's Cannings in Wiltshire.

Figure 6. 6 Monster chained to the south-west corner of the church at St Cyriac's, Lacock (Wiltshire), possibly eating human figures. The carving dates to the fifteenth-century.

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has already manifested in vegetative imagery (chapter 5) and will be seen to be present amongst siren imagery (chapter 8), due in part perhaps to the relationship sirens have with foliage.

The Metaphysics of Appetite

Clearly, medieval culture regarded the mouth as an enormously significant part of the body and one laden with symbolism, some aspects of which I have explored in the preceding chapter with regard to disgorging. It was through the mouth that the spirit might enter and leave the body. In chapter 5 I mentioned an illustration in Herrad of Hohenbourg's *Hortus Deliciarum* in which God animates the freshly created form of Adam by breathing into his mouth (1979: Fol. 17r (Pl. 10), 16). Well into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the mouth was popularly conceived of as the point of exit for the soul, which might take on animal form. Carlo Ginzberg cites part of the testimonial of an old woman, Crezia of Pieve San Paolo, accused of witchcraft in 1589: 'Forty years or more ago, I knew a witch called Gianna, and once when she fell asleep I saw a mouse come out of her mouth; it was her spirit and I do not know where it was going' (cited in Ginzberg, 1983: 19-20). The mouth, conceived of as both point of entry and/or exit for the soul into or out of the body, might thus be regarded as 'one of the principal thresholds of the body and thus of the self, a border between the inside and the outside' (Williams, 1996: 141). The image of the mouth offered a realization of the connections between body and soul and consequently related activities such as eating and speaking were invested with numinous characteristics.

In cloistered communities words were 'savoured as part of the slow and deliberate repetitions in a daily digested diet' (Camille, 1985a: 29). Indeed, the act of reading 'is very often expressed by the nutritive metaphors of eating and drinking: commentators bite, drink, chew, ruminate and digest' (Smith, 1994: 229). The connection between reading and eating may be seen as biblically inspired for much of 'the material on eating books comes from commentaries on Revelation 10.9-10,

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where an angel gives a book to John and tells him to eat it. The word used is not simply *comedite* (eat) but *devora* (devour)' (*ibid.*). To devour the word of God meant to build it into the very fabric of one's body, to become a living Bible. Thus the daily meditations on sacred scripture would, over time and through the eyes and the mouth, imprint the divine word into the very flesh.

Reading was of course an activity of cloistered communities, or secular men and women with some wealth to spare. Yet a similar concept – of absorbing the divine presence into one's body via the mouth and digestive process – would have been familiar to everyone attending mass, literate or not. In the ritual of the mass, 'the recurrent miracle of resummoning of the incarnate historical body of Christ' into the communion bread and wine, medieval villagers not only witnessed the conjuring of God at the altar but partook in the eating of God's body (Rubin, 1992: 50). Again, like meditative reading, the emphasis is upon the digestive absorption of Christ to effect transformation within, to grow nearer to God both physically and spiritually.

If one could digest and absorb the divine presence of God via the written word and the mass, so one could in turn be digested and absorbed. Throughout the later Middle Ages the development of the image of the hell-mouth gave visual expression to the effects of damnation in a profoundly visceral manner, hell being presented as one long process of devouring and digestion in which souls were gradually broken down. This was different to the death of the pious, whose soul lived on: entry into the hell-mouth meant the loss of one's soul, in short, a total annihilation of self. The torments of hell in the *Hortus Deliciarum* are associated with the ripping apart, masticating, and swallowing of the bodies of the damned. 'Antichrist's throne eats sinners, and decapitated heads are pressed under its claws; a demon forces money into the mouth of a greedy man; Jews are boiled in a cooking pot; a woman eats her child' (Bynum, 1995: 192).

The hell-mouth drew upon four principal images – 'hell pictured as an open pit that swallows the unbeliever, Satan pictured as a roaring lion seeking souls to devour, Satan pictured as a dragon spouting infernal flames, and Leviathan the great sea

beast' (Schmidt, 1995: 32). The connecting thread between these images was 'the common stress on damnation and its awful spiritual effects':

> The horror of being swallowed, the terror of being chewed, the fear of being eternally cut off from any sympathetic creature, the claustrophobic sense of enclosure, the torments of fire and darkness – all are common elements of the pit, the lion, the dragon, and Leviathan (*ibid.*).

Whilst the various characteristics of these creatures coalesced in the hell-mouth, on an individual level each one was able to carry the hell-mouth metaphor. Lion, dragon and sea-monster were part of 'an imaginative framework that connected the notion of being swallowed with that of moving into hell, of becoming hell's prey or food, of being damned' (*ibid.* 44). The images that I have presented above from buildings in the south and west of England often feature leonine or serpentine creatures as the devourers, perhaps to deliberately articulate these hell-mouth associations. In this sense there is a case to be made for medieval architectural sculpture as a moralizing medium. Yet, although these images might visualize a dreadful soul-loss the hell-mouth and associated imagery goes beyond a simple didacticism to convey,

> the relentlessness of change and dissolution, the devastating power of time, the inevitability of death. In the hell-mouth figure, humans are God's victim; the inferior species has become food, ingested and digested, disappearing forever down the throat of an insatiable and implacable power (Williams, 1996: 144).

Just as leonine and serpentine creatures were closely associated with vegetation, itself an ambiguous symbol in Christian mythology but one often suggestive, as I have shown in chapter 5, of positive associations such as spiritual renewal, so both could be associated with swallowing and damnation via the imagery of the hell mouth.

The Distorted Mouth

Grimacing Heads and Protruding Tongues

Grimacing or face-contorting heads may be found with regularity among medieval architectural sculpture and are a particular feature of many Romanesque corbel-tables in the region. At Romsey Abbey there are three corbels carved with heads with an arm that grips the chin to pull the lower half of the face to one side, thereby distorting the mouth (Fig. 6. 7). Many of the corbels on the west side of the south transept at Winchester Cathedral are similarly carved with grimacing heads although these examples are exaggerated to such a degree that the muscles in the neck stand proud. Moving into the thirteenth century but still very much in the Romanesque tradition are the images carved on the corbel-tables surrounding the towers at Milford-on-sea and Bishop's Cannings. Like the carvings at Romsey and Winchester grimacing heads can be found throughout these often highly repetitive sequences and appear amongst smiling heads, beast heads, masked heads and hybrid figures (Fig. 6. 8).

Later medieval grimacers may be found in similar architectural locations. At Leigh (Dorset) the pious figure located on the southwest corner of the west tower who holds his hands together below his chin in an attitude of prayer grimaces heavily, as do many of the gargoyles and grotesques that line the exterior north side of the north chapel at Old Basing (Hampshire). At Broad Chalke a grimacing face looks out from the string-course that runs beneath the crenellated parapet on the east face of the tower. All these examples occur in fifteenth and sixteenth-century contexts and provide further evidence of the association between grimacing head and exterior location.

More widely distributed throughout medieval ecclesiastical buildings is the head or figure extending the tongue. Three main styles are discernible: short, poking-out tongues; long tongues that droop over the chin; and split tongues.

Figure 6. 7 Corbels from Romsey Abbey: a demi-figure contorts the lower part of the face by twisting the chin and a cat, paired with a human head, chews its right forepaw.

Figure 6. 8 Grimacing heads and contorted faces peer out from the corbel-table on the tower at Milford-on-sea in Hampshire.

Examples of the first category are common throughout the period. An early example occurs beneath the late eleventh-century crossing tower at Alton, carved into one of the pale limestone capitals. Here the image is that of a small face with an extended tongue, easy to miss among the volutes and foliage sprigs that characterize the decoration here – indeed, the image occurs where a volute might well be expected. Small heads carved among geometric designs and abstract foliage are a standard feature of the repertoire of Romanesque capital imagery and in this instance the carver has elaborated on the standard formula. Romanesque corbel-tables in the area once again prove to be valuable sources of imagery, beast heads with extended tongues easily found among the carvings at Studland, Romsey and Winchester. Fifteenth-century examples occur among the roof bosses at Sherborne and Amesbury in the form of leonine heads (Fig. 6. 9).

Carvings that feature long drooping tongues occur on Romanesque corbels at Romsey and Studland. At the former the image is located on the east end of the chancel and is a paired figure corbel, the two human images possessing heads of unequal size. The figure with the larger of the two heads is the one that extends the tongue over the chin. The two carvings at Studland are also paired heads, one beast and one human, the latter the closest head to the corner of the building and angled at forty-five degrees to its partner. Unlike the relatively simply carved beast head the human head is a wild composition with large staring eyes, a mouth pulled apart by its two skinny arms and from the mouth a long tongue spilling out over the chin (Fig. 6. 10). I shall return to these images in the section on mouth-pullers (below) but here it is worth noting the architectural location, the specific angle of the head so that its gaze sweeps round the corner of the building, and the connection of mouth-puller and drooping tongue. Later medieval examples occur on the fifteenth-century bosses at Amesbury (Wiltshire) and Beaulieu (Hampshire) each of which depicts a human face with a long tongue extended over the chin (Fig. 6. 11a-b). The carvings at both sites are so similar to each other that it raises the question of whether they were produced by the same team of craftsmen.
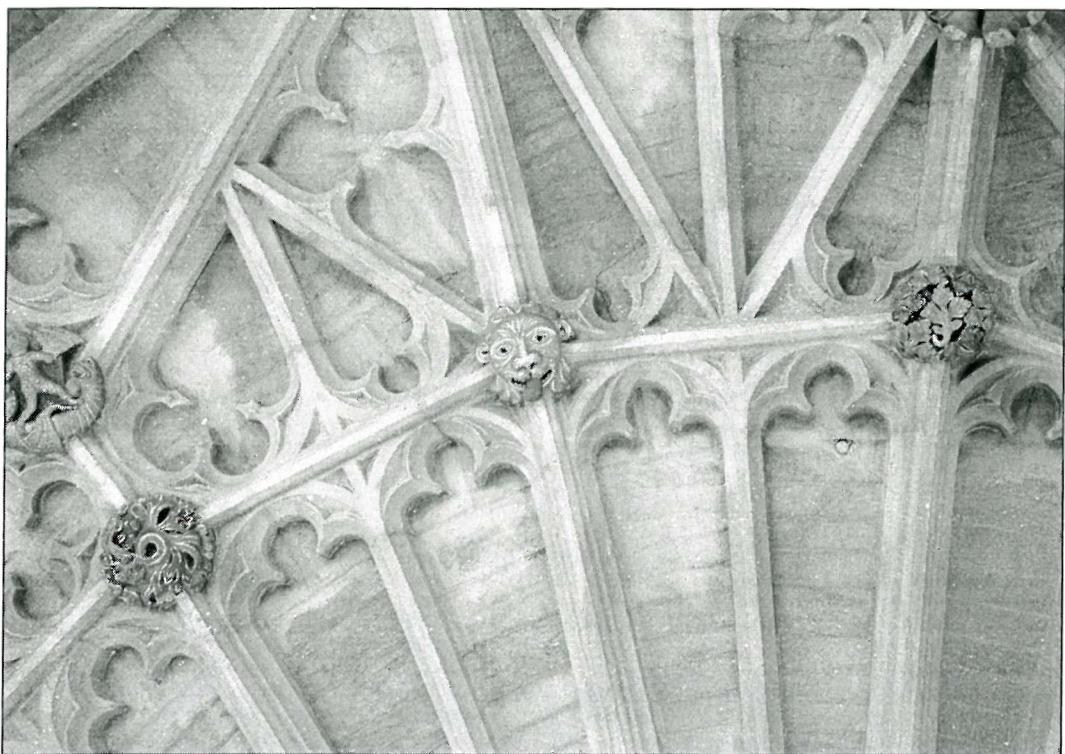
Figure 6. 9 Leonine head with extended tongue, carved as a roof boss in the fifteenth-century nave at Sherborne (Dorset).

Figure 6. 10 Mouth-puller with long drooping tongue, looking out from the north-west corner of the nave at Studland (c1125-1140).
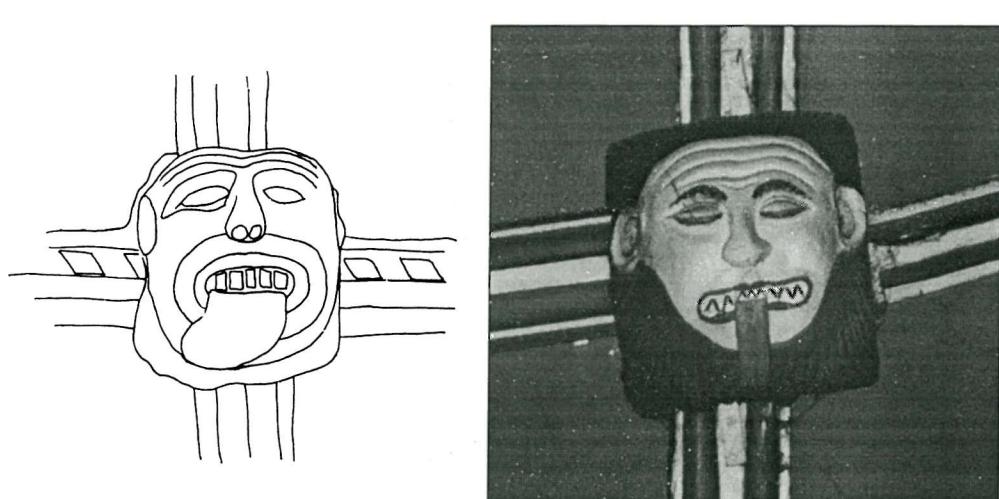
Figure 6. 11 (a and b) Fifteenth-century roof bosses from Amesbury (left) and Beaulieu (right) depicting human heads with long drooping tongues.

Figure 6. 12 Mouth-puller paired with a similar, although non-mouth-pulling head, on the south side of the nave at Studland. Both heads are carved to look out from the corbel at about forty-five degrees, allowing their "gaze" to cover a wider range than would be possible if they were simply facing out from the wall at a more conventional angle.
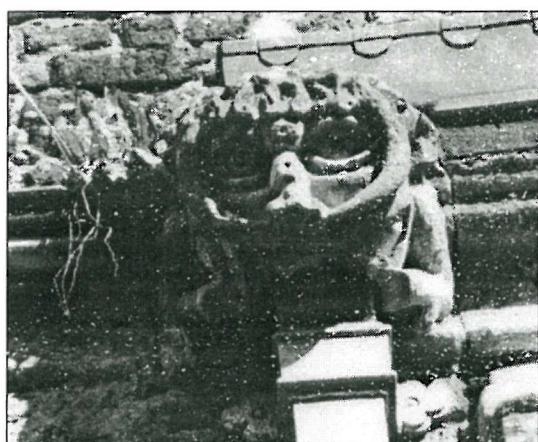
Figure 6. 13 Horned mouth-puller and former gargoyle in a late medieval context at Old Basing in Hampshire. The association between hybrid beings and mouth-pulling is not a coincidental one for it is articulated by a number of images in the region.

Split tongues are less frequent among medieval architectural sculpture than the carvings described above, but two examples of widely differing date exist at St John's, Devizes and Milford-on-sea. The image at Devizes is carved as a corbel in the church of St John on the south side of the chancel, itself formerly on the exterior but now enclosed by the addition of a fifteenth-century chapel. The carving, like the rest of the sequence on this part of the church, is a beast head carved in a simple, rounded manner with the mouth open enough to permit viewing of a split tongue. The image at Milford occurs as a mid-seventeenth-century roof boss and features the face of a woman whose divided tongue extends from her mouth.

The tongue shares many of the associations carried by the mouth but in particular, due to its vital role in the production of sounds, is linked to speech and language. Emphasis placed upon the tongue by extending its natural length or by dividing it into two parts tends to be, in the Christian tradition, suggestive of vice and deception (Gellrich, 2000: 107), characteristics often ascribed to mouth-pullers.

Mouth-pullers

Mouth-pullers are carvings of heads or figures whose hands pull the corners or top and lower lips of the mouth apart to create a disturbing grimace. These images are common throughout all periods of medieval architectural sculpture.

Carvings at Studland, Old Basing and Broad Chalke serve as good introductions to the motif (Figs 6. 11-6. 13). Among the corbel-table that runs the length of both sides of the nave at Studland are three mouth-puller images, two on the western corners of the nave and one on the south side of the nave. The former are each paired with a beast head and are themselves angled at forty-five degrees to look out directly from the corner; the carving on the south side of the nave also features a pair of heads. Only one of these is a mouth-puller but both are angled at forty-five degrees from the wall so that their gaze sweeps the entire south side of the building. The carvings at Broad Chalke date to the sixteenth century and occur on the south

porch, again, on each corner. Here there is a rare example of a full figure engaged in mouth-pulling as well as the more common single head. (Further examples of both Romanesque and later medieval date are summarized in Fig. A2. 8).

Analysis of a sample of the Romanesque imagery reveals a number of distinctive patterns (Figs A2. 5, A2. 6, A2. 7). First, these are images that tend to occur in an exterior position. Second the typical architectural medium during this period is the corbel which means that these images are most frequently found along rooflines. Further, over half of the sample images display some beast aspect, either as hybrid human-animal forms, humans paired with animals or beast head mouth-pullers. The later medieval images are similar in many respects. Again the predominant position is an exterior one, particularly as roofline carvings – gargoyles and grotesques. The animal aspect is still current although less dramatic than that of the Romanesque images.

Predominantly, mouth-puller carvings are found on medieval religious buildings as exterior roofline carvings such as corbels, gargoyles and grotesques. As noted in chapter 4, roofline imagery has long been associated with an apotropaic function and the persistence of this motif in such a location over several hundred years might suggest that this image was perceived to be effective in such a role. The animal aspect to the carvings might have accentuated this power or perhaps identified the mouth-puller as an outsider, like the wildman, closer to the world of beasts than that of humans.

The Head Between Figures

A variation on the mouth-puller motif is the head between figures, an image which typically appears as a central head with a figure on each side, each figure pulling open that side of the central head's mouth. This head can be human or bestial and in some cases is identifiable as a particular creature, for example, a lion. There are a number of variations on this basic format: one of the carvings at Stinsford only has one figure

at the side of the head; one of the carvings at Cerne Abbas, also in Dorset, has a third figure emerging from the open mouth.[1] Leonine or serpentine creatures may also appear on each side of the head instead of human figures, as the examples at Combe St Nicholas, Lacock (St Cyriac), and Sydling St Nicholas illustrate (see Fig. 6. 14a-g for illustrations and Fig. A2. 9 for a summary of the carvings in the area).

Before exploring some of the characteristics of these images in more detail it is interesting to note that the head between figures may be related to a number of other motifs in medieval architectural sculpture. Perhaps the most obvious are those carvings in which an object appears between two confronted animals or monsters. This includes the Tree of Life, the human figure or the human head. Examples of the Tree of Life or stylized tree between animals have been discussed in the preceding chapter while a human figure between confronted beasts may be found carved on a twelfth-century capital on the south door of the rural church at Little Langford. Here the male figure clad in a tunic and wearing a large moustache holds aloft two serpents, one in each outstretched hand (Fig. 6. 15). The style of the carving suggests some Germanic influence and indeed the motif has parallels in early Scandinavian art. Hicks illustrates some images from the Gallehus horns of c.400 AD, one of which is a kneeling figure with arms raised, flanked by two upright spiral-tailed serpents (Hicks, 1993: 13, fig 1.1) while panels from cross-shafts at Whalley and Kippax in the north of England also show figures between snakes (Bailey, 1980: 158). In Ireland a human head between beasts appears on one of the Romanesque capitals in the ruinous nave at Boyle Abbey (County Roscommon) and the motif is found throughout Romanesque art on the continent (Baltrušaitis, 1986: 100-105).

Whether derived from Germanic or Oriental sources or both, confronted animals or monsters are a stock motif of Romanesque carving. This tradition of representing

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[1] The series of carvings at Stinsford and Cerne Abbas display a remarkable degree of similarities, both in terms of subject matter but more noticeably in terms of the manner in which they are carved, both sequences characterized by a fleshy roundness and simplicity of detail. The fact that both sites also possess two examples each of the mouth-pulled head, in both cases one standard one and one variation upon the normative, suggests that both sequences were carved by the same team of masons.

Figure 6. 14a Mouth-pulled head between figures from the south-east corner of the south aisle at Stinsford. The basic template is well represented here: a central, oversized beast head flanked by squatting human figures, each using one hand to grip the corner of the central head's mouth. Further examples occur on the north-west and south-west corners of the nave aisles at Cerne Abbas (6. 14b-c), the south choir aisle at Sherborne (6. 14d), the south-west corner of the south aisle at Mappowder (6. 14e), the south-west corner of the tower at Longburton (6. 14f), and the south-east corner of the tower at Stoke-sub-Hamdon (6. 14g). Further examples occur at St Cyriac, Lacock, Combe St Nicholas and Sydling St Nicholas. In these examples (not illustrated) the flanking figures are dragons and lions.

Figure 6. 14b

Figure 6. 14c

Figure 6. 14d

Figure 6. 14e
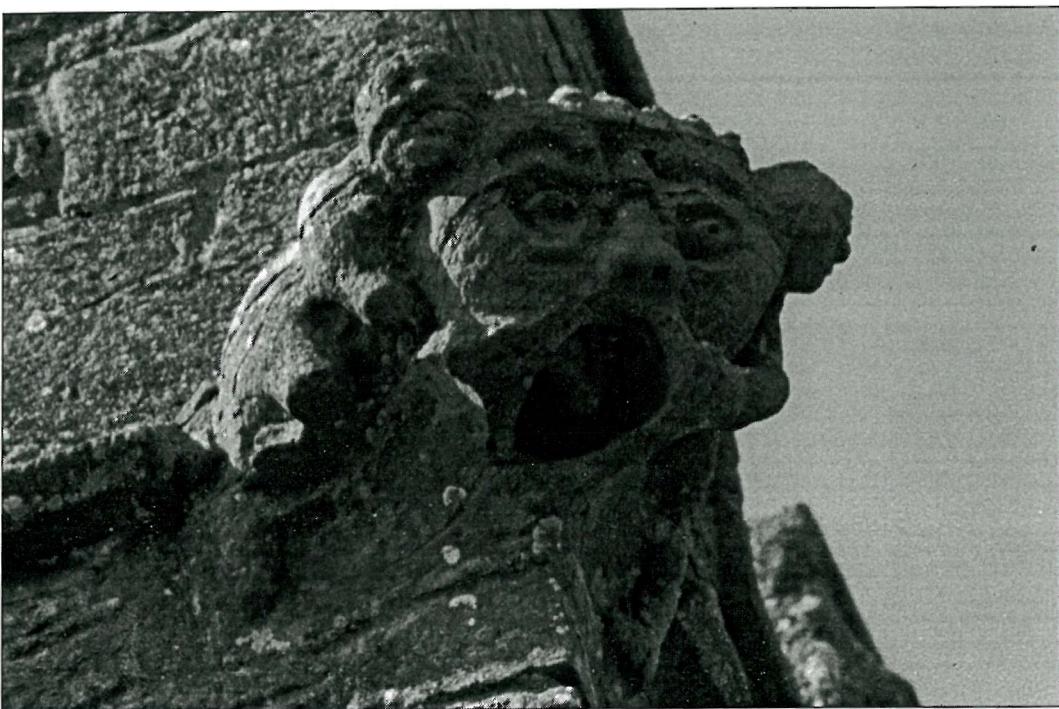
Figure 6. 14f

Figure 6. 14g

Figure 6. 15. Figure
between serpents
carved on an early
twelfth-century
capital at Little
Langford (Wiltshire).

Figure 6. 16 Bicorporate monster carved on the stallwork at Christchurch Priory in Dorset.
The carving dates to 1515 and occurs among a wide range of monstrous forms.

beasts in such a manner is likely to have had some bearing upon the development of bicorporate monsters, which are again well represented throughout medieval sculpture. Bicorporate monsters merge the confronted beasts together so that one head is shared by two bodies, as the examples on the early twelfth-century capitals at Stogursey and among the sixteenth-century stallwork at Christchurch Priory illustrate well (Fig. 6. 16). These images are perhaps more closely related to the head between figures than we might realize: a fifteenth-century grotesque on the exterior south side of the nave of St John's in Frome (Somerset) appears from a distance to be a head between figures but is in actual fact a bicorporate monster.

Despite this ready context of related images, the mouth-pulled head between figures is a highly specific carving, in terms of geographical and architectural location as well as date. Of the twelve examples discovered during the course of this research nine are on buildings in Dorset, two in Somerset and one in Wiltshire. This particular image therefore appears to be one that found favour in Dorset or was perhaps developed here, and may represent a localized tradition. All the carvings are to be found as gargoyles or grotesques and as such appear as roofline imagery on the exterior of towers, aisles or other aspects of the architecture. All date to the fifteenth century. Nine of these twelve carvings are located on the corners of these buildings which is particularly interesting when some of the more dramatic mouth-pullers discussed in the previous section do likewise – the Studland and Broad Chalke carvings are particularly good examples here. Perhaps these images represent a development of the mouth-puller motif into an extreme; the mouth no longer distorted enough when pulled open by its owner but requiring the strength of two figures or beasts. Once again the theme of force enters the picture and it is excessive force that has already been mooted as one of the key features of grotesque. Not only that, but the emphasis upon the mouth is exaggerated. In combination with its location on the exterior of buildings and in particular upon the various junctures where walls meet to form a corner, these images, of all the images to be found throughout medieval architectural sculpture, provide some of the best evidence for an apotropaic function.

Conclusion: Contorted Mouths and Meanings

Mouth-pullers have attracted various interpretations. One of the most common is that they are representations of people suffering from toothache, an interpretation most famously attached to an image on a carved capital in Wells Cathedral (Gardner, 1956). Others have noted similarities between mouth-pullers and certain personifications of the vices, in particular that of Ira or Anger, often depicted in medieval manuscripts with one hand on top of the forehead tearing the hair (a reference to Ira's wild disposition) and the other hand near the mouth (Aberth, 1989: 41). Lust has also been suggested (Weir and Jerman, 1986; Pennington, 1991). Whilst there may be some truth in these suggestions such ideas are difficult to validate beyond conjecture. The widespread creation and installation of the mouth-puller motif and its variants points toward a greater circulation than any potential manuscript model which suggests that the image was not simply a visualization of a textual idea. Rather, it might be best to see these carvings articulating deep-seated cultural anxieties and beliefs expressed through the metaphor of the mouth. It has been suggested that the deforming of the mouth signifies a deformation of the locus of speech and coherent language and as such betokens an irrational nature (Williams, 1996: 141-143). The hybrid or animal characteristics of many mouth-puller carvings would appear to substantiate such an interpretation and would fit well with the numerous architectural images that play with concepts of rationality, as the following chapter will explore in more detail.

Yet this does not address the liminality of the mouth. As I have already intimated the mouth was loaded with symbolism that drew attention to its in-between status, which, as Bakhtin was right to point out, made it an ideal subject for grotesque imagery. Perceived to be both point of entry and exit for the soul as well as the part of the body into which the divine presence, whether in the form of holy bread or written word, could be ingested and absorbed, the symbolic mouth carried an air of some mystery. In many respects it was a zone in which unseen spiritual forces were believed to mingle with the material life of the body and the senses.

Chapters 5 and 6 have explored the complex imagery of the mouth in medieval architectural sculpture, an image that performed a variety of symbolic tasks as both source of life and entrance to hell, as a threshold in which spiritual realities mingled with physical processes. The carvings that emphasize or draw attention to the mouth have accordingly been identified as participating in deep networks of meaning, articulating ideas connected with resurrection, death, the passage to the afterlife, appetite, language, speech and sexuality. An apotropaic purpose is likely for many images and particularly visible with regards to the mouth-puller carvings whose location and medium shows deliberate patterns or traditions with regard to placement.

Section III: Figures

The Fallen World and the Divine Wild: Animal Humans and Human Animals

Introduction

I have already drawn attention to the medieval equation of abnormal form and behaviour with geographical spaces that are best described as wilderness and located at the very edges of the known world (chapter 2). Deserts, forests and seas were all considered wilderness and believed to harbour numerous monsters (Le Goff, 1988: 47-59) which were typically perceived as counterpoint and exemplar to "civilized" humans.

When reason is held as the characteristic that defines humanness, loss of reason becomes the prerequisite for entry into this liminal, grotesque world. This is spiritually dangerous terrain for it represents the sacred in its unmediated, most raw form imaginable. The subjects of the following three chapters – hybrid beings, sirens, and entertainers and exhibitionist figures – might be considered heralds of such a state. As representatives of this supernaturally dark and chaotic energy that begins where "humanness" ends these images can be read as attempts to define what is acceptable human behaviour and indeed, what defines human, via the articulation of the negative other. At the same time, however, they are potent figures, for outside human networks of rational understanding, they are simultaneously beyond classification and consequently, knowing.

Such ambiguity is well represented by figures that blur the boundaries between humans and animals, the subject of this chapter. Visually the strongest impact is

achieved through the juxtaposition of those characteristics that are commonly deemed to define humans from animals (Baker, 1993: 91). In medieval art for example, animals might be represented wearing clothes, reading books, or playing a musical instrument. Conversely, humans might become "animalized" through the wearing of animal masks, lack of clothes, posture, via association, or through the display of any instinctual drive or emotion that bypasses the processes of rational thought, for example sexual desire, anger or laughter. Drawing upon these visual resources allows the creation of a multi-layered imagery in some carvings, as an early twelfth-century corbel on the east face of the south transept at Winchester Cathedral attests. Here, two dogs are engaged in sexual intercourse face to face, thereby mimicking the sexual position medieval theologians deemed most suitable for human procreation as well as drawing attention to the sexual act itself, an "irrational" and consequently a spiritually dangerous pursuit as the following text will explore.

Wild and Irrational Beings

Animals have long served human purposes, and our representation of them must be considered no different. H. W. Janson, for example, shows that the iconography of the ape in the Middle Ages had 'little in common with *bona fide* animals' but was manipulated for moral and social reasons (1952: 50). The use of the ape as a visual sign of animality points to a wider tradition in western thought in which animals serve to provide commentary upon human behaviour. One of the most common ways of defining what it is to be human is to draw comparisons with the animal kingdom through imposing on it characteristics 'diametrically opposed to those regarded as distinctive to the human condition' (King, 1995: 138). When animals are used for the purposes of articulating human identity they are invariably cast in a negative role, which may then extend to groups of people similarly identified as "different" (Baker, 1993: 78-81). Thus the western tradition of defining oneself against animal others means that any identification of humans with animals awakens

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'all the associations of impurity commonly attendant upon such blurring of boundaries' (Cohen, 1994: 61).

The roots of such conceptual uses of animals can be traced back to early Christianity. Christian thought,

> based on the scriptural revelation of an all-wise and all-powerful Divine Creator who made man in His own image and held out the promise of eternal life if His commands were obeyed, was soon faced with the task of establishing criteria by which man, i.e. the descendants of Adam, could be differentiated from his 'poor relations' or *similitudines* such as the hybrid races or the apes (Janson, 1952: 74).

The need to define humans was therefore no academic exercise: salvation depended upon it. The predominant factors used to distinguish human from animal throughout the Middle Ages were those established by Augustine – mortality and reason. Whereas the former was perceived to distinguish humans from demons or angels the latter set humans apart from the rest of the animal world – indeed, for the medieval period humanness was largely defined by the capacity for intellectual understanding. Moreover, rationality was closely bound with spirituality; humans were created in the image of God, animals were not. Animals therefore lacked reason and in lacking reason they also lacked an immortal soul. Hence the difference between animals and humans predicated upon the difference between mortal and immortal souls with reason the determining factor (Sorabji, 1993: 201-2; Cohen, 1994: 61; Salisbury, 1994: 5-6; Bartlett, 2000: 681). Such close conceptual correspondences between human form (the image of God), reason, and immortal souls meant that anything perceived to weaken the reasoning ability in man simultaneously threatened to "deform" his image and in deforming his image the immortal soul was in peril. Thus the irrational or mad were more animal than human.

Animal characteristics were used throughout the visual arts to help articulate such concepts. Artists between the eleventh and sixteenth centuries commonly distorted

the human body by addding tails, horns, fur, claws, wings and other animal features in order to represent demons and devils (Link, 1995: 38; Lorenzi, 1997: 24-26). Like the devil the ape was perceived to parody humans and the two were associated in art and thought from the sixth to the fourteenth centuries (Janson, 1952: 20, 50-51). However, from the beginning of the Romanesque period the idea of the diabolic ape was overshadowed by a much broader interpretation that pictured the ape as 'a grotesque caricature of man' or man in a state of degeneracy:

> If we refuse to accept God's offer of salvation; if we repudiate the spiritual aspect of our nature and unreasoningly abandon ourselves to the sins of the flesh; in short, if we let our animal impulses get the better of us, then we sink to the level of the ape, human in form but laughable and contemptible in all of our actions because we have cut ourselves off from the source of divine wisdom (*ibid*. 14, 29).

Although the wild animal could be the criterion of the low and supplied the very imagery for picturing irrational and therefore debased angelic or human beings it was also closely identified with the unknown, that which stood beyond the laws and customs of human society. In this sense wild animals and angels shared common ground for both inhabited non-human worlds invested with supernatural powers. This paradox was embodied most distinctively throughout the Middle Ages in the figure of the wild man, a shaggy-haired being that dwelt in forested and mountainous regions.[1] Commonly represented carrying a rough club and wearing a wreath of leaves the wild man, like the classical satyr to whom he is related, possesses semi-divine characteristics (Jones, 2000c: 1038). Yet despite the similarities to ancient deities and woodland spirits the figure was essentially a Christian one and may be found throughout Romanesque and Gothic architectural sculpture on the continent and in Britain (Bond, 1910: 16; Ellis, 1912; Druce, 1915: 159-169; Cave, 1948: 209; Tchalenko, 1990; Moore, 1992), as well as in other media such as manuscript

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[1] In depth commentaries upon the figure and his social context can be found in Bernheimer, 1952 and Bartra, 1994.

illuminations, ivory caskets, and tapestries (Husband, 1980: figs 3-5; Rushing, 1998: 58; Jones, 2000c: 1040).

Companion to the wild man was the less frequently depicted wild woman, 'a figure who pushed the parameters of medieval female otherness to the limit' (Stock, 2000: 1041). As hirsute as her consort she was likewise incapable of rational thought and therefore less than human, kin with the wild beasts. Closely related to the same folkloric image-pool of archaic goddesses and libidinous she-demons from which the siren and other monstrous females drew their form and character,[2] the wild woman personified traditional medieval anxieties about women, in particular woman as temptress (see Chapter 8). The hag-like wild woman could appear as the most enticing of women in order to seduce the unwary knight or shepherd, only 'revealing her abiding ugliness during sexual intercourse' (White, 1972: 21). This magical ability to shapeshift suggests that the figure became identified with a faery nature or supernatural power in the folklore of the Middle Ages.

It was not just wild women that became identified with the animal world but women in general, located in the hierarchy of reasoning beings somewhere between animals and men. This was perceived to be biologically determined.

Medieval thought upon sexuality was closely linked to that of gender and drew many ideas from the Graeco-Roman world, particularly from the Greek physician Galen (c. AD 130-201). Galen, like Aristotle before him, had proposed that the human body was made up of four basic elements that also made up the universe: fire, water, earth and air. Although a balance of these elements or humours was regarded as necessary for the good health of the individual there were critical differences between male and female with regards to temperature. One of the 'most fundamental factors in the

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[2] Stock notes two figures of importance for the image of the wild woman, Maia, the Roman goddess of fertility, and Lamia, the tragic figure of Greek mythology whose children (by Zeus) are killed by jealous Hera (Stock, 2000: 1042). The beautiful princess takes her revenge by destroying the children of others, and behaving so cruelly that her face turns into a nightmarish mask. Eventually she becomes identified with the Empusae, succubal daughters

distinction between females and males' in the Middle Ages was heat (Cadden, 1993: 280; see also Bullough, 1973; Cadden, 1996); the male body was considered to be hot and dry, and the female cool and moist. It was heat that determined physiological difference between the sexes: hairiness, external genitalia and broad shoulders all resulted from the greater heat of the male body. Semen was also believed to be formed out of blood and this likewise required heat. In contrast, the internal genitalia and general lack of body hair that characterised the female body were understood to result from an insufficient amount of heat during the processes of conception and gestation. Women were literally 'cold men' whose development into the normal male body had been arrested due to insufficient temperature. Coldness not only determined form, however, but characteristics too. Whereas the essential body heat of men meant that any food they ate was quickly burnt up, the coolness of women allowed them to store food as fat, menstrual blood and milk, enabling them to carry and nourish children. This cold moistness also predisposed the female body to decay and putrefaction and as a result women were perceived as much closer to the earth and had to work twice as hard as men to develop their spirituality.

For the Middle Ages then, biology was destiny. The norms of male and female sexuality were 'determined by the genital organs with which one was born' (Salisbury, 1996: 81-82) and which were deemed to have a corresponding effect on male and female characteristics. Cold supposedly made women fearful, unintelligent, meretricious and sedate while heat made men intelligent, independent, active and forthright. Women who pushed against the limits of their "sedentary" sex by engaging in vigorous physical activity were said to run the risk of burning up their fat and menstrual blood and becoming masculine in nature. In a similar manner, men who engaged in too much sexual activity ran the risk of losing their masculinity. This was due to the classical identification of the source of maleness in semen, which, as Thomas Aquinas put it, contained 'the heat of the father's soul' (Jacquart and Thomasset, 1988: 57). Consequently, both classical and to a large extent, medieval,

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of Hecate, seducing young men and sucking their blood while they sleep (Graves, 1960: 205; see also Hurwitz, 1999: 43; Begg, 1996: 40; Leinweber, 1994: 77).

views of male sexuality were 'joined with fears of losing that masculinity' (Salisbury, 1996: 82).

Loss of masculinity was perceived as a simultaneous loss of reason. One theory posited by the ancient Greeks and current in medieval Europe located the origin of semen in the brain believing that it descended through the spinal cord to the testicles, a theory that highlighted this relationship between masculinity and rationality (Salisbury, 1996: 89). Not only was it desirable for men to abstain from sexual intercourse if they were to preserve their reason and intellect but it was also considered necessary to control the 'profoundly sexual' women whose supposedly insatiable appetites carried the potential to unleash disorder and madness (*ibid.* 84). Certainly, women's bodies were characterised 'as more naturally given to sinfulness, requiring taming and containment' (Gilchrist, 1999: 114). Eve's mythological ability to wreck hierarchical order was seen as the inherent capacity of everywoman and from the fourth to the fourteenth centuries influential clerics and theologians repeatedly made the point: women were 'weak, irrational, emotional, governed by passion and always receptive to evil influences' (Grössinger, 1997a: 4). Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) wrote:

> For good order would have been wanting in the human family if some were not governed by others wiser than themselves. So by such a kind of subjection woman is naturally subject to man, because naturally in man the discretion of reason predominates (cited in Bullough 1996: 225).

Such opinions were not exceptional in an age that equated active sexuality with religious deviation and heresy (*ibid.* 1982: 217). Indeed, the conceptual link between sexual deviance and spiritual deviance was well established for 'both were perceived as wilful challenges to the natural order established by God and nature' (Murray, 1996: 203).

In summary, then, different degrees of reason were perceived to distinguish angels from humans and men and women from animals, the latter being the most irrational.

To this must be added the question of mortality: angels are immortal, humans possess an immortal soul and mortal body, while animals are purely corporeal, mortal and soulless. Thus the hierarchy of reasoning beings, with angels the closest to and animals the furthest from the divine, is bonded to concepts of continuity, angels eternal and timeless, humans eternal in spirit, and animals bound to the earth and its rhythms. Any loss of reason results in a 'descent' -- angels become more human, men became effeminate and women more like animals. The instinctual drives and desires of the body, with which animals had become identified in medieval theology (being as they were nothing else but body) were consequently potentially hazardous and to be moderated or, if possible, avoided altogether, lest one lose one's immortal soul. Thus animal imagery can serve to indicate fallen angels and fallen humans.

At the same time, however, it is important to remember that the wilderness was actively sought by holy men and women to facilitate experience of the sacred in its rawest state, unmediated and unfiltered. These recluses, like wild men and women, came to embody the wilderness, for example, by becoming excessively hirsute (see chapter 2). Consequently, like all liminal art, the animal and hybrid animal imagery found throughout architectural sculpture of the medieval period points in opposite directions simultaneously, towards other meanings and understandings.

Association and Mimicry

Throughout medieval architectural sculpture human and animal figures are represented together in numerous ways and this section can do little justice to the range and diversity of the imagery. However, in presenting a selection of images I aim to illustrate some of the variety of human/animal interactions and how these may have served to articulate ideas connected to wildness.

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The Struggle with the Lion

Of all the animals routinely depicted in medieval architectural sculpture it is the lion and the serpent or dragon that tend to appear as personifications of supreme force and power. Like the natural world these ambivalent figures could be perceived as a threat to human society, something needing close control or conquest; yet at the same time this raw power might suggest a supernatural presence or divinity, something beyond the human order. I have already discussed the close connections established throughout medieval sculpture between leonine and serpentine creatures and foliage (chapter 5), expressed visually via partially foliate bodies (often the tail), as sinuous stem-like bodies (dragons), or as cat masks disgorging foliage. Such close association with the vigorous regenerative potency and seasonal decay of plant life meant that both creatures and their derivatives became concentrated images of the natural world and subject to the same ambivalent responses medieval culture had towards nature. Since for most of the medieval period natural and supernatural were woven tightly together the use of both creatures to signal the presence of supernatural beings is perhaps unsurprising. Chapter 8 explores their connection with sirens, themselves often represented as partially foliate and accordingly identified with the mutability of the physical world as well as heralding the otherworld and the unknown. Certainly, the lion is an ambivalent figure in medieval art, capable of signifying divine beings of a positive character such as Christ, or of malevolent intent, such as the devil (Rowland, 1973: 119-120; Moore, 1992: 135-136; Tisdall, 1998: 158-161). These two extremes are both related to the supreme power of the animal: the Aberdeen Bestiary notes the 'force with which they rage',[3] and it is this wildness that is the source of their varying symbolic significance.

The association of the lion (and the dragon) with the wild is strengthened by its connection with the wild man. Remnant's catalogue of misericords provides a particularly good example of the range of the late medieval imagery. Often the figure appears with or riding lions, chained by the neck, as at Chester Cathedral, Lincoln

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[3] See www.clues.abdn.ac.uk:8080/besttest/alt/comment/best_toc

Minster, Norwich Cathedral, and Holy Trinity Church, Coventry (Remnant, 1969: 25, no. 23; 90, no. 12; 106, no. 11; 161, no. 4). The wild man fighting lions or part leonine creatures such as griffins appears on the misericords at Hereford Cathedral, St Mary of Charity in Faversham (Kent), St Botolph's in Boston, and Lincoln Minster (*ibid.* 61, no. 7; 71, no. 1; 86, no. 5; 89, no. 3; 90, no. 22). The figure may be devoured by the lion, as at St Andrew's, Norton (Suffolk) (*ibid.* 147). A number of images present the wild man with dragons or both dragons and lions, as the misericords at St George's Chapel in Windsor (Berkshire), Carlisle Cathedral, Manchester Cathedral, Beverley Minster and St Mary's, Beverley, illustrate (*ibid.* 7, no. 3; 30, no. 14; 83, no. 12; 176, no. 14; 177, no. 5; 178, no. 10). Although the wild man does appear with other animals and human figures among British misericords, the lion and dragon appear to be the most common accompanying beasts. It is interesting that although the wild man often appears little different from the standardised figure of Samson, and can himself be attacked by the creature, he is the only one of the two that is also commonly represented in control of the lion, leading it by a chain. The paradox, that only the partially wild themselves can control the most powerful of beasts (as opposed to killing them) echoes the figure of the desert recluse who, in the quest for God, ends up mimicking the very animal nature he is fighting against (Moore, 1992: 139).

The image of a clothed human figure either seated upon the back of or standing next to a lion and forcing its mouth open with the hands is also a fairly common carved subject. Examples of Romanesque date may be found on tympana (Stretton Sugwas, Herefordshire), corbels (Englishcombe, Somerset) (Fig. 7. 1a), and capitals (blind arcading, north side of the nave at Christchurch Priory, Dorset; on the continent, a capital in the nave at Vézelay). Later medieval examples occur on roof bosses (Milton Abbey, Dorset) (Fig. 7. 1b), misericords (Norwich Cathedral, Norfolk) and as gargoyles (Mappowder, Dorset). A variation represents the figure attacking the creature with weapons. Biblical explanations for this image are not difficult to find, the struggle with the lion being associated with both Samson and David (Bond, 1910: 18). Here the conquest of the lion is often read as a simultaneous conquest of bestial human nature.

Figure 7. 1 (a and b) The figure with lion on (left) a Romanesque corbel on the south side of the chancel at Englishcombe and (right) a fourteenth-century roof boss from the south chancel aisle at Milton Abbas.

Figure 7. 2 One of the many leonine gargoyles to be found among the fifteenth-century work at Sherborne. This particular one appears on the north side of the nave.
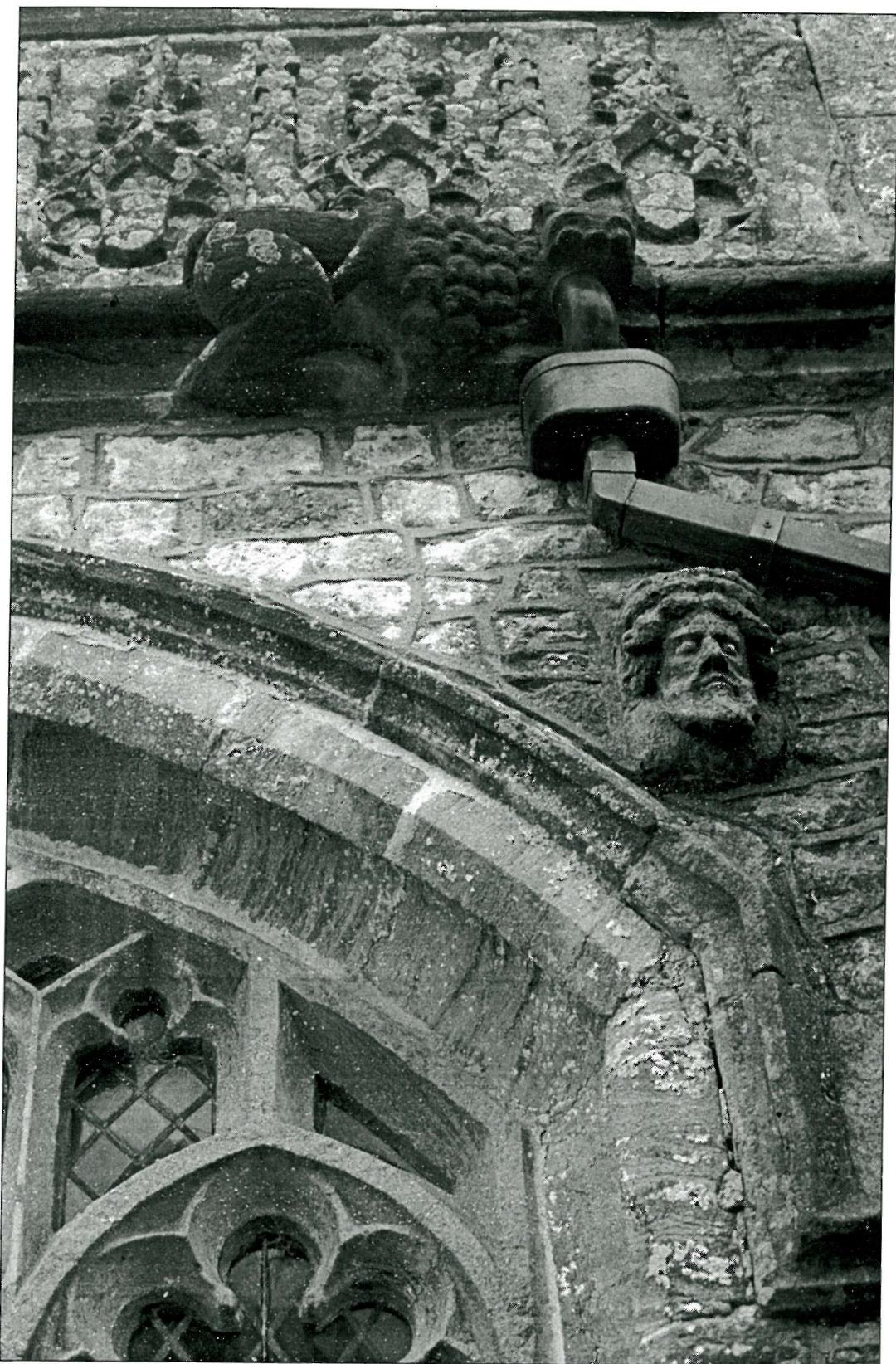
Figure 7. 3 Fifteenth-century gargoyle from the north side of the nave at Mappowder in the form of a lion with a thick mane and tail curved upwards between the rear legs.

The lion forms a major ingredient of many hybrid-bodied later medieval gargoyles, which are likely, in their representation of force, to have continued in the tradition of architectural apotropaia already well established by this time (Loewenthal, 1978). Examples may be found among fifteenth-century work at Sherborne Abbey and Mappowder, both in Dorset (Figs 7. 2-7.3).

Animal Mimics and Animal Mimicry

Whereas the ape in Romanesque art was a diabolic character belonging to the world of bestial demons and naked tumblers the ape in Gothic art takes on a more parodying role, travestying human behaviour. In this guise the ape becomes one of the favoured satirical animals of the later Middle Ages and numerous simian burlesques can be found among architectural art (see, for examples, Janson, 1952: 165-171; Remnant, 1969: 213). The misericords at Winchester Cathedral provide plenty of examples. Here, apes are represented holding a crock of eggs, playing a harp, holding forward an owl, and dressed in women's clothing (Callé, 1994: 6, N24; 7, N22; 8, N19; 29, S28), images suggestive of folly, the sensuality of secular music, idolatry, and vanity. If it can be said that the lion and the dragon often represent the primal force of the wild and the animal world, then the ape in Gothic art in most cases represented vice. The association may have been strong enough for the figure to point to such ideas even when not engaged in any particular activity, as on the top of a bench end at Bradford Abbas (Fig. 7. 4).

Apes were not the only animals to parody humans in medieval architectural art, however. Goats, dogs and pigs were commonly used, among others, to introduce the idea of bestial humanity. This could take various forms and situations, but one of the most common images is that of the animal musician, already encountered above among the Winchester misericords in the image of the musical ape. The same series features other musical figures – a pig playing a viol, a sow playing a double pipe, and human musicians as supporters on each side of the apes dressed as women (*ibid.* 6, N25; 29, S28). In Romanesque carvings at Barfreston and Canterbury Cathedral

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Figure 7. 4. Apes adorn the top of a late medieval bench end at Bradford Abbas in Dorset.

(Kent) it is possible to find other examples; at the former a voussoir carved with a fox playing the harp, at the latter, capitals featuring various musical animals and hybrid beings (Klingender, 1971: 316 fig. 197; 318 fig. 200). At Lacock Abbey, a fifteenth-century roof boss in the south cloister walk represents a wyvern with a long coiling tail playing the harp (Fig. 7. 5). The frequent occurrence of the musical animal throughout medieval art, increasing in the Gothic period, may well be due to the disrepute into which the travelling minstrel had generally fallen by the fourteenth century (Varty, 1967: 79). Yet it is likely that the image carried broader connotations. From its very beginnings 'Christianity had taken its stand in favour of vocal music and sharply opposed to instrumental music' (Buchner, 1958: 23). Until the arrival of the troubadours who were often of the same class as those they entertained, musicians, animal trainers, acrobats and entertainers were all closely associated and regarded as low class, nothing more than 'rogues and vagabonds' (Montagu, 1976: 19). Indeed, there is sometimes 'more than satire in these representations of musical animals, especially those which dance or incite people to dance, for the medieval church considered dancing to be sinful'; these musical animals are 'perhaps meant to be a reminder of the dangers hidden in music's charms' (Varty, 1967: 79).

Humans dressed as animals also feature among medieval architectural sculpture. Disguises of various forms were an intrinsic part of medieval festivities and viewed with varying degrees of apprehension by ecclesiastical and social authorities. As late medieval sumptuary laws clarified clothes were inextricably linked with and defined one's identity and status; the wearing of masks or disguises transgressed these social codes and thereby constituted a threat to order (see Sponsler, 1997: 324-328; Camille, 1998a: 246-247). Dressing as animals was a particularly deep-seated tradition closely associated with seasonal celebrations such as those connected with the New Year (Piponnier and Mane, 1997: 143). Animal disguise, however, was just one element within a panoply of transgressive acts and revels in which boundaries of all kinds were wilfully disrupted. These included the overthrow of 'spatial parameters (by invading, penetrating, and trespassing), social status norms (through role reversals and play with stranger-householder relations), gender constructs (through cross-dressing and sexual inversion), and racial divisions (with the use of blackface)'

Figure 7. 5 A wyvern plays the harp on a fifteenth-century roof boss in the cloister at Lacock Abbey.

Figure 7. 6 One of the late medieval foliate masks carved on the capitals beneath the crossing tower at Winterbourne Whitechurch.

(Sponsler, 1997: 326). At a deeper level, disguise might be considered a sinister magic, 'and masks, which disguise reality, as paradigmatic of the falseness of perception' (Camille, 1989: 62). Masked figures may be found among the thirteenth-century corbels on the tower at Bishop's Cannings and the capitals of late medieval date at Winterborne Whitechurch in Dorset (Fig. 7. 6).

Hybridity

If the link between human and animal could be evoked via masks and disguises, it was made even more explicit in hybrid figures. These occur frequently in medieval architectural sculpture and take numerous forms. First, the human body may provide the template for the addition of recognisable animal parts, for example horns, ears, hair, hooves, paws, talons, and tails. Second, human and animal bodies may be represented in roughly equal measure: mythological creatures such as mermaids and centaurs are produced in this way. Finally, the animal body can provide the template for the addition of human parts, as the examples of harpies (bird body, human head) in the misericord sequences at Winchester and Exeter Cathedral illustrate well, some of the figures among the latter also possessing human hands rather than the customary talons.

In violating the boundaries between human and animal, as established by early Christian theologians, hybrid beings acknowledged and explored the similarities between humans and beasts (Salisbury, 1994: 138; Kordecki, 1997: 28). Accordingly they occupied a precarious position in medieval thought. In some cases they were viewed as necessary parts of the Creation for 'the marvellous was seen as an integral part of the world, proving the power of God to make such odd creatures, and reminding people that God remains in control' (King, 1995: 140). As the Middle Ages progressed, however, the idea that cross-species interbreeding between human and animal was responsible took hold. Whilst classical mythology presented 'so little distinction between humans and animals, that half-human/half-animal births were unremarkable, and the Gods could appear as animals without diminishing their

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power and stature', the Judeo-Christian attitude differed substantially (Salisbury, 1991: 174) yet it was not until the idea that demons could inhabit physical bodies was taken seriously that real fear of the hybrid took hold. Prior to the twelfth century, demons were perceived to be too insubstantial and ethereal to have the ability to interfere with embodied humans but with the development of concepts such as purgatory, in which souls could suffer physical torment at the hands of corporeal demons, evil was no longer 'an idea to medieval people. It was real and had bodies' (Camille, 1989: 63).

Since chapter 8 explores representations of hybrid beings in which animal and human body parts are equally mixed, or those formed by the addition of human parts to an animal template, the following section takes a closer look at those images in medieval architectural sculpture in which the human body provides the framework.

Human Bodies with Animal Features

Among the medieval architectural sculpture of the south of England, carvings in which the human body provides the template for the addition of animal parts are fairly common. It is evident that although a variety of animal parts were used in these images – horns, ears, hooves, paws, for example – one feature above all others dominates throughout both Romanesque and Gothic carvings: animal ears. Before looking at these images, however, I wish to explore the other animal characteristics that were used to create hybrid humans.

Examples of human heads with horns may be found among the Romanesque corbels at Priston (Somerset), as a label stop on the west side of the tower at Camerton (Somerset), and as a gargoyle on the west end of the church at Old Basing in Hampshire (Fig. 6. 13). The Old Basing figure is also a mouth-puller. Horned figures in medieval art drew upon various classical prototypes, such as the satyrs and rural deities such as Pan, but were most closely connected in the Middle Ages with devils and demons. The connection extended to any imitation of horns, for example twin-

peaked headdresses (see chapter 8,). Indeed, the horned figure in the series of corbels at Priston appears next to the head of a woman wearing a horned headdress, illustrating a paired mimicry that occurs in other examples throughout the sequence.

Hands and feet, the extremities of the human form, might also be represented dissolving into animal or bird form. At Winchester Cathedral, one of the early twelfth-century corbels on the west side of the south transept is carved with a figure possessing an oversized head with a wide, snout-like mouth and two legs that end in hooves. Human figures with animal heads or heads displaying animal characteristics are not unusual in architectural sculpture, and frequently it is difficult to identify whether a head is wholly human or wholly animal. In some cases human figures are carved with an animal head, as for example the male exhibitionist in the Bettesthorne Chapel at Mere (Wiltshire) (Fig. 7. 7). At Edington (Wiltshire), there is a carving of a figure on the south side of the south chancel aisle that has hooves instead of hands (Fig. 7. 8). Birds' talons are substituted for feet on a figure at Sydling St Nicholas (Fig. 7. 9), while paw-like hands appear on a mouth-puller at Englishcombe (Fig. 7. 10).

As noted above, human figures with animal ears occur throughout both Romanesque and Gothic architectural sculpture and are by far the most common animal part used in conjunction with the human body. Twelfth-century examples may be found among the corbel sequences at Winchester Cathedral and Romsey Abbey, Maiden Newton, Englishcombe and Priston. Indeed, in Romanesque art in this area the figure rarely appears carved on any other medium. These twelfth century images are also distinguished by the pointed shape of the ears common to carvings of feline beast heads, whereas later medieval images tend to depict the ears as rounded and elongated, like ass's ears. Examples of the latter can be found at Fiddington and Wells (Somerset), and Amesbury and Broad Chalke (Wiltshire). The popularity of the motif of animal ears is likely to be connected to that of the fool, long associated with an ass-eared headdress and himself a liminal figure (Gifford, 1974: 340).

Figure 7. 7
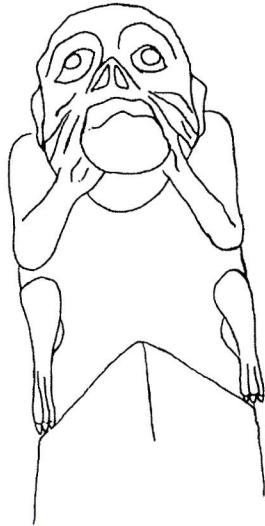
Figure 7. 9

Figure 7. 8

Figure 7. 10

Figure 7. 7 Exhibitionist figure from the south (Bettesthorne) chapel at Mere, formed from a human body with the head of a beast (fourteenth-century).

Figure 7. 8 A hybrid creature from Edington based upon the human form but with hooves instead of hands, animal ears and a wing-like protruberance sprouting from behind the head (fourteenth-century).

Figure 7. 9 Squatting human figure with bird's talons instead of feet, south side of the nave at Sydling St Nicholas (fifteenth-century).

Figure 7. 10 Grimacing human head with animal ears and a talon-like hand resting on the lower part of the face, north side of the chancel at Englishcombe (twelfth-century).

Certainly, grotesque body image has been noted as particularly appropriate to the fool, a figure closely related to trickster characters who also embody various paradoxes, for example, between the natural and the artificial, status and lack of status (Koepping, 1985: 212; Gifford, 1974: 339; Southworth, 1998: 1-9). This tension is well expressed in the hybrid image of the human with animal ears, a figure who although not physically hybrid is associated with a hybrid appearance and thus with ambiguous characteristics. From the latter part of the fourteenth century there is an increased emphasis upon the demonic character of the fool, which would be in keeping with the common associations connected to hybrid appearances and disguise by this point.

Conclusion

For the Middle Ages wildness was awesome and something to be feared as well as sought out. However, fear of the wild meant that, for medieval Christianity, the natural and the demonic were closely connected. Although medieval theology never fully succeeded in settling the question of which specific sin had caused the Fall, there was little disagreement that the eating of the apple 'represented above all a victory of sensual appetite over law' (Janson, 1952: 91). Into the Edenic couple, created in the spiritual image of God and sharing reason and intellect with the angels, was now introduced 'a bestial aspect' which, contrary to God's original intention, made them 'kin to the rest of the animal world' (*ibid.* 92). Thus the Fall, sin, the body and animality were irrevocably linked, connections which were well-exploited visually.

Yet at the same time, medieval images of human figures with animal characteristics could work to signify holiness. In early Christian art the evangelists, three of whom could be identified by animal symbols (the ox, eagle and lion) might be portrayed as hybrid beings, having fully integrated their animal characteristic into their human form. The human-animal hybrid figures in medieval architectural sculpture readily

illustrate that ambiguous meanings and ambiguous forms are closely connected. Women, often seen as less rational and therefore closer to the animal world than men, could be portrayed in a like manner as hybrid human-animal beings with similarly ambiguous characteristics, as the following chapter now turns to explore.

Sirens

Introduction

Sirens frequently appear amongst medieval architectural art, and here the south of England is no exception. However, whilst classical examples of the figure have long attracted academic attention (e.g. Harrison, 1903; Pollard, 1949, 1952, 1965; Aasved, 1996), as has the image and related figures among continental medieval art (Jalabert, 1936; Faral, 1953; Baer, 1965; Gaignebet and Lajoux, 1985: 142-50; Leclerq-Marx, 1997), studies of the image in English medieval art are significant by their absence. In sharp contrast is the work produced by scholars of medieval literature (de Rachewiltz, 1983; Hollander, 1983; Houwen, 1997) and drama (Haroian, 1989; Betcher, 1996).

In its strictest sense the term "siren" refers to the classical creature of composite form with an avian body and a woman's head, and occasionally breasts and arms. Closely related is a range of composite beings whose form combines a woman's (or, in some cases, a man's) upper body with avian and/or piscean characteristics, serpentine or leonine features. In order to distinguish between them yet at the same time not lose sight of the siren characteristics that they hold in common, throughout this chapter I have adopted the following terminology:

- Fish-sirens or mermaids/mermen denotes the most popular medieval visual expression of the siren, that of a woman (or man) from the head to the waist, and a fish below.
- Bird-sirens are visually indistinguishable from harpies, and in medieval lore the two are considered similar in many respects. The bird-siren or harpy takes

the form of a bird with a human head and occasionally upper body, usually female.

- Bird-fish-sirens are perhaps more frequent in manuscript illustrations than architectural sculpture, typically appearing with the head and upper body of a woman, a fish tail, and bird's wings and/or feet.

- Bird-serpent-sirens add a long, often coiling, serpent tail to the bird-siren form. Some examples have membranous wings rather than feathered ones and look rather like a human-headed wyvern. Closely related is the draconopede or human-headed serpent.

- Bird-lion-sirens combine the body of a lion with the wings of a bird and the head and upper body of a human, again, usually female. Sphinxes are close relations.

In considering the siren, then, a whole host of creatures – mermaid, harpy, draconopede, sphinx – must be taken into account. Yet the chapter will reflect the medieval bias toward the mermaid whose form was the most common of all in architectural sculpture.

Sirens in Medieval Architectural Sculpture in the South of England

Romanesque Carvings

Despite the wealth and variety of Romanesque and early Gothic architectural carvings of sirens on the continent (see, for examples, Jalabert, 1936; Baltrušaitis, 1986: 68-73; Kahn, 1987; Leclerq-Marx, 1997), eleventh- and twelfth-century work in the south of England attests to a paucity of siren imagery. The major sites of Romanesque architectural sculpture in the area, for example, Romsey Abbey, Malmesbury Abbey, Winchester Cathedral, Studland, and Devizes (St John), do not

feature any carvings of sirens.[1] Accordingly, for this chapter I have extended the boundaries of my research to include other counties in the south of the country such as Devon, Sussex and Kent.

Three carvings of Romanesque date may be found at the rural churches of Barfreston (Kent), Lullington (Somerset), and Nately Scures (Hampshire).

Barfreston, St Nicholas

Some of the richest Romanesque architectural sculpture in the south of England adorns the rural church of St Nicholas, Barfreston (Kent). The simple two-cell structure of nave and chancel features an extensive corbel-table, carved voussoirs surrounding the wheel window at the east end of the chancel, carved capitals to the blocked up north door and a frieze of various beasts on the inside north wall of the nave. However, perhaps the greatest concentration of imagery occurs around the south door. Here the roll-mouldings of the arch of two orders display carvings of figures engaged in various crafts whilst carved into the flat surface of the wall above is a series of medallions arranged into an arch, each of which encloses a figurative image. The capitals are carved in detail – even the abaci are decorated with small images of beasts. But for the purposes of this chapter, it is the tympanum that is of greatest interest.

The dominant image of the tympanum is the figure of a seated Christ holding a book open on his left knee and with his right hand raised in blessing (Fig. 8. 1). The figure is enclosed within a *vesica piscis* that sprouts, at varying intervals, into sinuous, scrolling foliage. Within the spaces made by the tendrils appear smaller figures and it

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[1] Romanesque carvings of sirens may be found elsewhere in the country on the tympana at Stow Longa (Huntingdonshire) and Long Marton (Cumbria), on capitals at Durham Castle Chapel (Durham) and Rock (Worcestershire), and on a corbel at Austerfield (Allen, 1887: 126; Benwell and Waugh, 1961: 135-136; Hicks, 1993: 261-262, 269; Druce, 1915: 175; Serra, 1969: 362 and fig. 40). Twin-tailed mermen are carved on the corners of the square font at St Peter's, Cambridge (Pevsner, 1954: 182).

Figure 8. 1 Detail of the central section of the tympanum at Barfreston showing the figure of Christ within the vesica and at his feet, a foliate-tailed harpy (left) and the mermaid (right), both encircled by the foliate stems that grow from the edge of the vesica itself.

Figure 8. 2 The voussoirs around the wheel window at the east end of the chancel at Barfreston are carved with numerous creatures, among them several bird-sirens.

is among these that the siren appears. These smaller figures do not appear to be randomly located. At the top of the tympanum are carved two angelic figures, one on each side of Christ's head, below which appear four more figurative images, two on each side of Christ's waist. Two of these are angels holding scrolls (the two closest to the body of Christ); the other two are crowned heads, one female and one male. Below this row of images, at the lowest point of the visual field afforded by the tympanum and flanking Christ's feet, are four monstrous creatures, again, two on each side. From the viewer's left to right these are: a sphinx-like creature without wings or rear legs, whose hindquarters twist into a thick vegetal tail; a second, similar creature, somewhere between a sphinx and a harpy, with long straight hair, two avian forelimbs, and a foliate tail; a mermaid with a single tail curved upwards which she grasps with her right hand and who holds an oblong shape under her left arm; and a griffin in profile. Collins noted that sphinxes do appear in comparable medieval contexts, for example, on maps such as the *Mappa Mundi* housed at Hereford Cathedral, without wings and with only a single pair of legs (Collins, 1933: 11). It has been suggested that the weathered shape held by the mermaid is a fish (Druce, 1915: 176; 1938: 28; Benwell and Waugh, 1961: 135; Klingender, 1971: 315).

A further seven bird-sirens, some with foliate tails, are carved on the voussoirs around the exterior of the wheel window at the east end of the building, along with other beasts (see Fig. 8. 2 and Sheridan and Ross [1975: 61] for illustration).

Lullington, All Saints

Like Studland in Dorset, the village church of All Saints at Lullington is little altered from its linear plan of nave, axial tower and chancel, the only later medieval addition consisting of a south chapel adjoining the nave. There is a carved corbel-table on the exterior of the north side of the nave, below which appears a highly ornate and perhaps French or Spanish inspired north door with a tympanum depicting the Tree of Life flanked by beasts. Above this appears a voussure of beakheads, while in the space between the top of the door and the eaves of the roof a semicircular arch

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Figure 8. 3 One of the bird-serpent-sirens at Lullington. This picture clearly illustrates the plaited hair that flies outwards from the back of the head.

frames a niche enclosing the figure of a seated and nimbed Christ with one arm raised in blessing.

The high quality of the carving continues inside the building, on the font and the chancel arch and it is the carving associated with the latter that bears the image relevant here. The chancel arch of three orders terminates in two clusters of capitals. All capitals are crowned with thick plain abaci, apart from the innermost ones that support abaci bearing repetitive leaf motifs. The northernmost capital on the north side of the arch is carved with two confronted bird-serpent-sirens, their heads meeting on the corner. Both are near identical. Each has an oversized human head with a long plait trailing horizontally from its top, a pair of large upward pointing feathered wings, two tiny forelimbs and a twisted, beaded, serpentine tail that coils upward (Fig. 8. 3). (Similar tails feature on the two confronted wyverns on the corresponding capital on the south side of the arch). The capital next to it features a cat-head disgorging thick foliage.

The Lullington carving bears many similarities in its form, especially the rendition of the wings, to other Romanesque carvings in the south of the country. These include the bird-serpent-sirens around the wheel window at the east end of the chancel at Barfreston and the Griffin carved into a voussoir now set into the west wall of the church at Binstead on the Isle of Wight.

Nately Scures, St Swithun

The church of St Swithun is a particularly small and uncomplicated building built from flint and composed of a nave and apsidal ended chancel with no structural division between the two. There is only one doorway, and this is on the north side of the nave. The arch forming the door is carved with chevrons and dates to between 1150-1200 (Keyser, 1915: 9; Pevsner and Lloyd, 1967: 343). This originally featured a capital carved with a mermaid, which has now been removed to the inside of the church and is set upon a corbel in the southwest corner of the nave (Fig. 8. 4). A

Figure 8. 4 The twelfth-century capital from Nately Scures now resides within the south-west corner of the nave rather than its original position on the east side of the south door. Weathering has removed much detail but the figure of the mermaid is still clear, with a spray of foliage appearing from behind the tip of the tail.
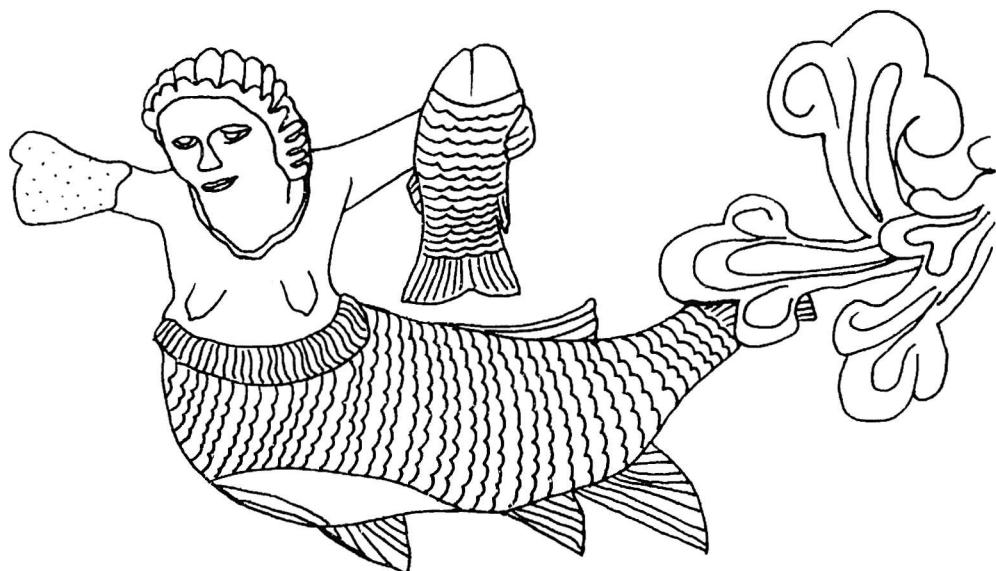
Figure 8. 5 The mermaid from a misericord at Exeter Cathedral (mid-thirteenth century).

modern carving of a mermaid based upon the twelfth-century image replaces the capital, and is set into its original location on the east side of the north door (Brough *et al*, 1911b: plate facing p154). Although there is some damage to the stone, which has also been whitewashed, the carving on the twelfth-century capital can still be made out. This consists of a rather chunky body and oversized head with no hair or facial features (apart from a mouth), and skinny arms, the left one bent at the elbow to rest the hand upon her waist. The single tail curves up and to her left, and foliage sprigs are visible in the background. A curious lollipop-shaped item appears next to her left elbow; this might represent a mirror.

Later Medieval Siren Carvings I: Misericords and Stallwork

By far the majority of siren images in the area occur in later medieval contexts, in particular upon misericords and associated stallwork, and roof bosses.

Exeter Cathedral in Devon possesses the oldest complete set of misericords in the country (c.1238-1244). These are notable for their 'many carvings which consist entirely of foliage or grotesque beasts bursting into leaf and thus straddling the boundaries of the animal and plant worlds' (Glascoe and Swanton, 1978: 11). Number 46 in Glascoe and Swanton's system is a carving of a mermaid with single tail and neat, wavy hair to the shoulders, holding aloft a fish in her left hand (Fig 8. 5). It is possible that she may have originally held another fish in her right hand but the end of her outstretched arm has been broken off. An intricately carved fish tail is partially obscured by the vigorous foliage of the (viewer's right) supporter.

A further misericord (no. 33) is carved with a pair of confronted mer-figures, distinguishable as male and female only via their different headgear (Fig. 8. 6). They hold between them a tambourine above a grimacing human head with animal ears, and the tails of each splay out into stiff-leaf style foliage. According to Glascoe and Swanton this calls into question 'their identity as mermen or sirens. The texture of their tails is compatible with the carver's rendering of both plumage and scales and
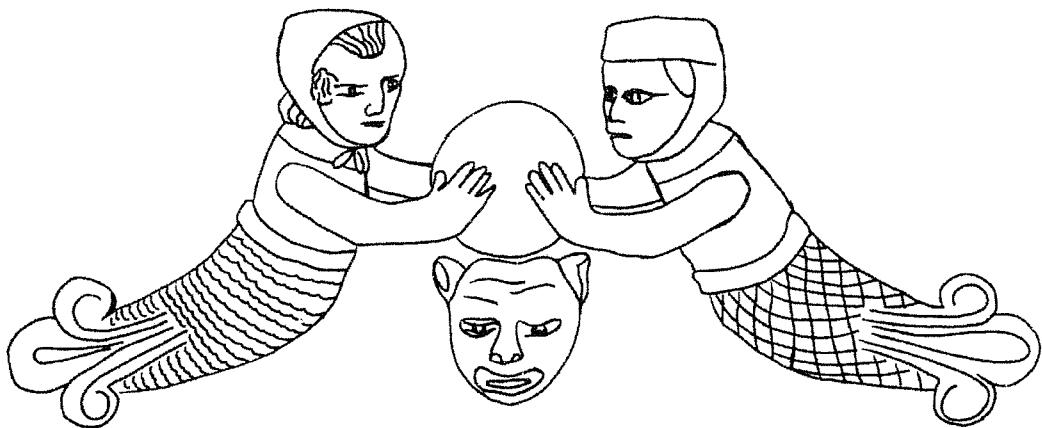
Figure 8. 6 The confronted pair of mer-like creatures carved on a misericord at Exeter Cathedral. Note the foliate sprays instead of fish tails.

these creatures thus seem to defy precise definition' (1978: 22). Imagery that associates mermen, foliage, and musical instruments or pageantry is, however, found at other sites in the southwest. At St Andrew's, Sutcombe (Devon) a rich yet sadly deteriorating set of late fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century bench ends features a merman carved on one of the pews in the centre of the nave (Fig. 8. 7). He has a beard and wears a hood and long-sleeved top while tassel-like objects hang from his upper arms. In his right hand he appears to hold a bone; in his left hand, held up in the air, the object he once held is difficult to decipher. To his left there is another hybrid figure, composed of an upper body with shaggy, mane-like hair and a reptilian tail that ends in a dragon-head. The figure itself has an animal head and wields a sword and shield. Both the merman and this figure are placed upon individual shields, suggesting a possible heraldic impetus, although most of the figures in the series are represented in a similar fashion and many of these appear to be far from the creatures of heraldry. The rest of the series articulates connections between serpentine forms, the jester or pageant figure, foliage, and piscean scales.

Further examples occur on the bench ends in the church of the Holy Ghost at Crowcombe (Somerset). Dating to 1534 and thus of a similar date to those at Sutcombe St Andrew, the carvings here include a twin-tailed merman whose tails sprout into foliage and a complex image based around a head disgorging berry-laden stems (the latter is illustrated in Basford, 1978: pl.92). Two male, club-wielding

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Figure 8. 7 Bench end from the church at Sutcombe in Devon carved with a merman and composite figure. The associated props carried by each suggest a connection with late medieval pageants or dramas.

figures, who also hold small rosette-like shields, emerge from the ears of the head. Each is naked to the waist and appears to have a tapering, pisciform-like tail, although it is impossible to tell for sure since the very tips of each remain hidden inside the ears of the head. Rings of what may be scales encircle the waist of each, although it is equally possible that these are foliate, like the waist band on the twin-tailed mermaid at Christchurch Priory, considered in more detail below. Whilst Basford tentatively suggested that these were 'belligerent mermen (?)' (1978: 126), a more recent commentator has noted that the "scales" on the two figures are comparable to the hair on the Green Man's head, and must therefore represent leaves (Centerwall, 1997: 33 n5). This would make the two figures comparable to 'whifflers', foliate figures associated with pageants and processions throughout the later medieval and early modern period (*ibid.* 29-30). Thus the imagery within the sequence of bench end carvings appears to connect mermen or mer-like figures with foliage and figures associated with pageants. This visual complex of associations, however, cannot be explored in any detail here.

At Winchester Cathedral the misericord sequence dates to 1308. The connection between bird-siren and fish-siren is made explicit in one carving located on the north side of the choir in which the central figure of a harpy, clad in a hood, is flanked by a mermaid and a merman (Callé, 1994: 15, N8; Remnant 1969: 56, 8). The mermaid has long straight hair and holds a comb in her right hand whilst using her left to support the misericord ledge itself (Fig 8. 8a); mirroring her position, the merman holds a fish in his left hand and uses his right hand to support the ledge. This is the only occurrence of a mermaid in the entire sequence of misericords.

Also of fourteenth-century date are the misericords at Wells Cathedral (c1325-1340). Two of these are carved with mermaids, and both appear on the south side of the choir (Remnant, 1969: 136, numbers 5 and 15) (Figs 8. 8b-c). Number five is partially unfinished, her arms held so that they are bent at the elbows with the forearms pointing downwards, having yet to be properly smoothed off. This mermaid also has short wavy hair, breasts, and a scaleless tail, again perhaps unfinished. The latter example (no. 15) is completed and is striking for the fact that she suckles a lion. The

mermaid suckling a lion occurs carved upon misericords at other sites in the country[2] and is conceptually related to the image of Terra or Luxuria, as explored in more detail further on in this chapter. She holds the tip of her fish tail in her left hand.

Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century examples may be found upon the misericords and stallwork at Highworth in Wiltshire and Christchurch Priory (Figs 8. 8d-e). At the former the mermaid holds aloft a large circular mirror in her right hand and has long straight hair that disappears down her back. Her left hand rests upon her tail. At Christchurch Priory the late medieval carved dossiers (the panels behind the back row of stalls) date to 1515 and feature a twin-tailed mermaid with each arm outstretched to grasp the end of each tail. At her waist is a foliate band, and her straight hair is neatly pinned beneath a decorated cap (Roberts *et al*, 2000: 10).

Bird-sirens or harpies are a common image upon misericords in the area, appearing in the sequences at the cathedrals of Exeter, Wells and Winchester.[3] Indeed, the popularity of the figure in some misericord sequences (for example the 6 single images and 2 pairs at Winchester) might suggest that the image appealed to the clerics who would have used these spaces and for whom the carvings would have been made. That the figure became identified in the later Middle Ages, as did the siren, with prostitution and feminine allure in general might go some way towards explaining such a bias.

The typical form that harpies assume in these carvings is that of the body of a bird with a human head. The difference between male and female harpies is therefore represented by gendered headgear or secondary sexual characteristics such as a beard. When only a single harpy appears it is invariably female but when two appear they

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[2] Remnant notes the examples at St Mary the Virgin, Edlesborough (Buckinghamshire), Hereford Cathedral (Herefordshire) and Norwich Cathedral (Norfolk) (1969: 11, 62, 107, and illustrated in Plate 8 a-c).
[3] The relevant misericords from these three sites are as follows (numbering after Remnant 1969): Exeter Cathedral 4, 6, 7, 32 (Remnant, 1969: 34-37; Glasscoe and Swanton, 1978: 22-24); Winchester Cathedral north side 3, 8, lower south side 2, 3, south side 12 ?, 16, 24, 29 (Remnant, 1969: 56-59; Callé, 1994: 15, 17, 19, 23, 25, 29); Wells Cathedral 34 (Remnant, 1969: 137).

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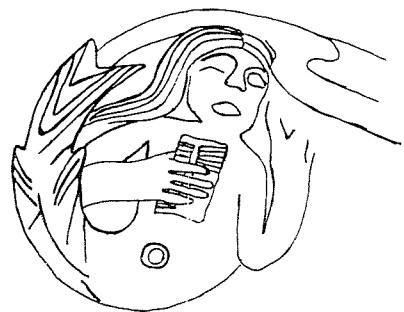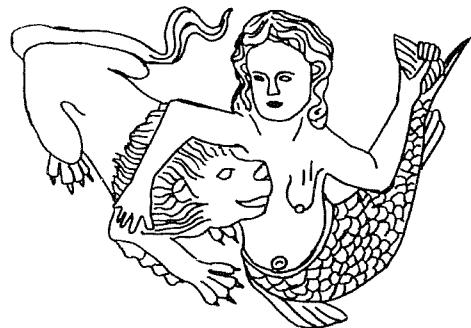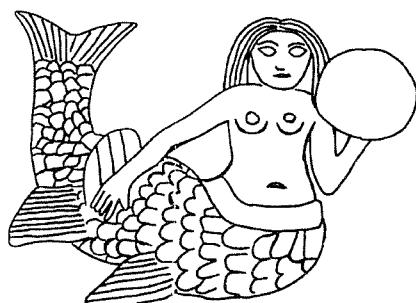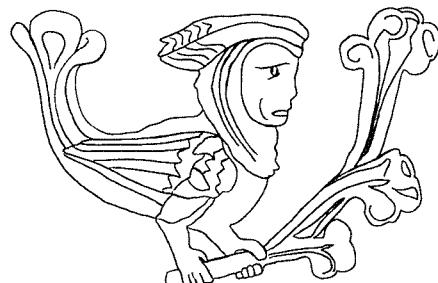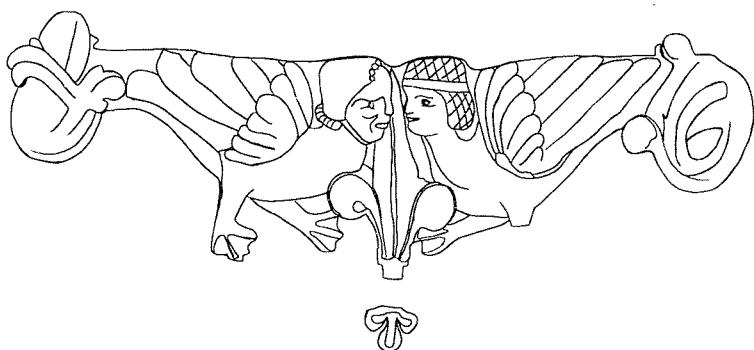
Figure 8. 8 (a-g) Fish and bird-sirens (or harpies) carved on misericords from a) Winchester; b and c) Wells; d) Highworth; e) Christchurch; f and g) Exeter.

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are usually a female and a male couple. Paired harpies occur at Exeter and Winchester (Fig. 8. 9 a-b). At the former, they are the central image flanked by foliate supporters; at the latter, they are the supporters flanking images of a figure in chain mail, and on a separate misericord the demi-figure of an inverted man.

a   b   c
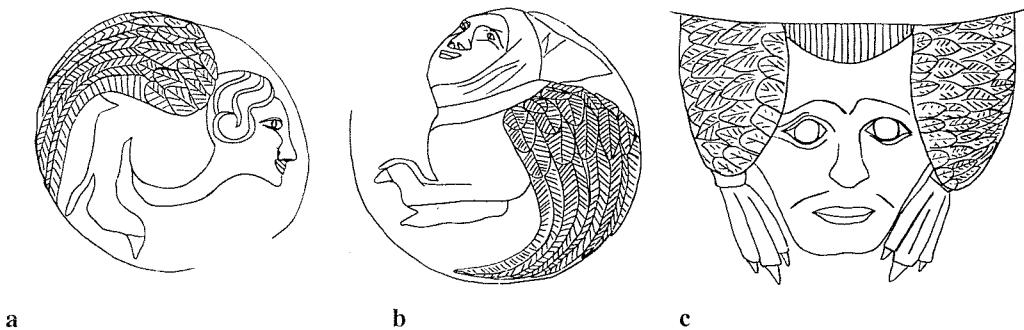
Figure 8. 9 Harpies from misericords at Winchester Cathedral.

Variations upon this form are numerous. The Exeter images are curious for the fact that some of the harpies have human hands rather than talons. One male and female pair even hold hands while another single harpy uses them to grip the sprig of foliage upon which it perches (Fig. 8. 8f). Like other monstrous creatures in medieval architectural art they could be represented in bicorporate form as another misericord from Exeter illustrates. The association with foliage is particularly strong in this series as well, the bicorporate harpy, one of the pairs and the harpy perched upon a branch possessing tails that sprout into fleshy greenery, similar to the paired mer-folk in the same series and the mermaid roof bosses at Stoodleigh. One serpentine and foliate-tailed pair flank a central fleur-de-lys (Fig. 8. 8g).

Harpies in these misericords at Exeter and Winchester rarely appear without headdresses, contesting the simple equation of female monsters with loose hair and immorality that is often posited for their close relations, the sirens. One of the images at Winchester plays upon this connection of headdress and harpy, representing the bound hair on either side of the head not with a net but as the front part of feathered wings (Fig. 8. 9c). The face appears between these "wings", and

below, on each side of the chin, are long talons. The image is remarkable for concentrating in a simple form the idea of the harpy with the form of bound hair, which, elaborately displayed or veiled beneath headdresses attracted scorn and censure from ecclesiastical authorities throughout the later medieval period.

Other examples of monstrous female creatures in the region include a crowned harpy figure on a misericord at Winchester, a pair of harpy-like monsters at Wells Cathedral, again, on a misericord, and the extraordinary bench-end depicting a sphinx at Cheriton Bishop (Devon) (Fig. 8. 10) (on sphinxes see Scafella, 1987; McCall, 1995).

Figure 8. 10 Motif from a late medieval bench-end from Cheriton Bishop near Exeter. Although the image is a striking one there are parallels with other carvings in the vicinity, for example the broad feathered wings of the foliate-tailed harpies at Exeter Cathedral (Fig. 8. 8f-g).

Later Medieval Siren Carvings II: Roof Bosses

Roof bosses are ubiquitous throughout later medieval churches, monasteries and
cathedrals and provide numerous examples of sirens and related figures. Unlike the
carved misericords and stallwork these do not appear to be restricted to any
particular location within the building but may be found in chancel, cloister and nave
alike.

The bird-fish-siren from the chancel at St Barnabas, Queen Camel (Somerset) is
most unusual for the period and unlike the majority of architectural carvings may be
confidently ascribed to the direct influence of a bestiary (Fig. 8. 11a). This is because
the bosses in the chancel are of a high quality and feature a large number of detailed
and unusual subjects, such as the unicorn, *Aspido Chelone* or whale, the Peridixion
Tree with doves and dragon, the tigress and mirror, and elephant and castle. These
are familiar from bestiary manuscripts and the patrons of the living were the
Cistercian monks of Cleeve Abbey, who, like many monastic communities, were
likely to be familiar with bestiary creatures (Baxter, 1998; Druce, 1937). This might
suggest that these were images meant to be viewed, although their height from the
ground (c. 30ft) would mitigate against this.

Among the bosses are two mer-folk – a merman who holds his long beard with one
hand and his tail in the other, and a siren. The siren carving combines pisciform and
avian characteristics; below the waist her fish tail is formed from spines and scales of
differing sizes, while joining behind her shoulders are two large feathered wings that
fill the space of the rest of the boss. She has long flowing straight hair to her waist,
and in her right hand she holds a mirror while with her left hand she combs her hair.
Not only is the combination of bird and fish characteristics unusual by this period,[4]
but the act of combing the hair or running a hand through the hair, rather than
simply holding a comb as an attribute, is very rare. In the later medieval period for a

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[4] Other examples of bird-fish-sirens in medieval architectural sculpture occur on misericords
at Carlisle Cathedral (Cumberland) and Hereford Cathedral (Herefordshire), and on a roof

woman to unbind her long hair and comb it in public could be regarded as immodest (de Rachewiltz, 1987: 110). The fourteenth-century tapestry made in Angers, for example, represents the Great Whore of Babylon from the Revelation of St John (Rev. 17. 1) sat upon a rock, gazing into a mirror and combing her long hair (see Barb, 1966: 1, a).

Further examples of sirens on roof bosses occur at Exeter Cathedral, in the choir, and in the cloisters at Lacock Abbey. The image at Exeter is in many respects a fairly conventional mermaid with long wavy hair and single tail gripped in her right hand: unusually, however, her genitals are partially visible (Fig. 8. 11b). At Lacock there are three carvings of mermaids, two of which are similar to each other, the third a very innovative composition that reveals much about her role in later medieval art. Two are both conventional representations of the figure, depicting her with long straight hair to the waist, small breasts, and holding aloft a comb and mirror in each hand (for example Fig 8. 11c). The fish tail, like many of the carvings in this series, curves around the side of the boss. The third boss, however, represents a wilder aspect. This figure has, in addition to the pisciform tail and upper body of a woman, the head of a beast with a long snout, large oval eyes and pointed ears (Fig 5. 27). From the mouth emerges a single stem of foliage that divides into two branches that curve back around to encircle the figure. Her arms have thick, shaggy hair hanging from them and she holds a mirror in her left hand and grasps her tail with her right. The connection with the beast, foliage and the mirror, but not the comb, is an interesting one that articulates a number of connections. Bird-serpent-sirens may also be found among these roof bosses. These are notable for their membranous, rather than feathered wings, which provide a more dragon-like appearance (Fig. 8. 12).

In the cloister at Canterbury Cathedral (Kent), there is a boss in the south range carved with the image of a crowned mermaid with long hair, twin tails, and with a circular mirror in her left hand and a comb in her right (see Sheridan and Ross, 1975: 84 for illustration). Pale blue lines occur above her head, while the three-pointed

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boss at Selby Abbey (Yorkshire). The Hereford carving dates to the mid-fourteenth century;

crown is painted gold. The cloister dates to the later medieval period (fifteenth –
early sixteenth century) and features carvings of foliate heads and other figures in the
south walk, while the bosses in the other three ranges are all carved with heraldic
devices. A curious feature of the bosses in the south walk is their size – many are no
larger than the width of the stone ribs upon whose contact points they appear. This
might indicate that they are more decorative than structural, yet, paradoxically, the
height from the ground (c. 18ft) makes many of the images difficult to see with the
naked eye.

Elaborate vaulting such as that in the nave at the former Abbey of Sherborne (Fig. 8.
13a), or in more rural churches such as that at St Margaret's, Stoodleigh (Devon),
might also feature bosses carved with mermaid figures. The image from the former
site is illustrated on the cover of J. H. P. Gibb's booklet (n.d.) and appears upon a
background of foliage. She holds a mirror and comb aloft in her right and left hands
respectively while the scaled tail curves up to the left of her body. These bosses date
to the very end of the fifteenth century. Of similar date are the four mermaid bosses
in the nave roof at Stoodleigh, each of which holds aloft a circular mirror and a
square-shaped comb (for example see Fig. 8. 13b). The tail arrangements of all are
curious; on two carvings the thin waist curves into rounded hips and a scaleless, fish-
shaped tail that bursts open at the end into a tight display of fleshy foliage. Two
sprays of foliage also sprout upwards from each side of the tail. The tails of these
carvings may be compared to those of the mer-couple on the misericord at Exeter
Cathedral, which also feature foliate ends to their fish tails. The other two images
divide the skirt-like upper half of the fish tail into two flipper-ended legs, again, with
two sprays of foliage emerging from behind the tail to grow upward and outward.
The foliate theme is continued in the continuous wall-plate carvings on each side of
the nave that feature human heads disgorging thick stems of berry-laden greenery.

A post-medieval sequence of roof bosses in the chancel of All Saints' church,
Milford-on-sea also features a carving of a siren. Here she appears only from the

the other examples are fifteenth century.

a
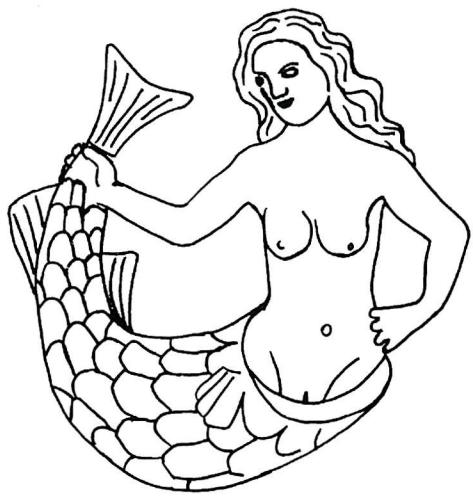
b

c

Figure 8. 11 Mermaid roof bosses from a) Queen Camel; b) Exeter; c) Lacock.

Figure 8. 12 Harpy carved on a fifteenth-century roof boss in the cloisters at Lacock Abbey. A serpent's tail and membranous wings are noteworthy features.

a

b

c

Figure 8. 13 Roof bosses from a) the nave at Sherborne and b) the nave at Stoodleigh. The wall-painting (c) is from the south side of the south aisle at Oaksey and depicts a mermaid in the water between the feet of St Christopher.

waist up as a demifigure of a naked woman with long, curly gold hair streaming down her back. She holds her flipper-like hands together in prayer, and at her waist there are scales or small fish shapes. The sequence of bosses dates to the mid-17th century.

Wall-Paintings

It is important to remember that the common appearance of English medieval church interiors today is but a pale reflection of their working life several centuries ago when the walls would typically have been painted with figures and scenes. At few sites does enough painted imagery remain to give an adequate impression of the potential visual effect, although where images have been uncovered and conserved or restored it is possible to realise how dramatic this effect must have been.

The mermaid frequently appeared in medieval wall paintings, usually with St Christopher. The saint with the Christ child upon his shoulder is typically shown standing in the full stream of a river, the mermaid appearing amongst the fishes, as at Oaksey in Wiltshire (Fig. 8. 13c) and Poughill in Devon (Fig. 8. 14). At both sites the mermaid appears in the water between the giant's legs. Whilst the figure at Oaksey can be trusted as a medieval representation the figure at Poughill, however, must be viewed with care. Rediscovered beneath the whitewash in 1894 a contemporary watercolour sketch of the image now hung in the church shows a number of differences to the restored painting. In the sketch the mermaid has short dark hair, holds a mirror in her right hand and extends her left arm horizontally. In the image today she appears with long golden hair, breasts, holding a circular mirror with handle in her right hand, and holding her left hand up, palm out, at the shoulder. A large fish-tail curves round to her left, and there are various fish in the water around her. The reflection of her face is visible in the mirror. (Benwell and Waugh, 1961: 139, 179 no. 82; Betcher, 1996: 67). Other examples of the mermaid with St Christopher exist at Baunton and Breage (Cornwall), Bramley (Hampshire), and did exist until the nineteenth century on the north wall of the nave at Ditteridge (Wiltshire).

Figure 8. 14 Detail of the restored wall painting at Poughill in Cornwall.

Characteristics of the Siren Image

The above examples have introduced a variety of siren forms and related figures that may be found amongst medieval architectural sculpture. Since the majority of the examples are fish- or bird-sirens I have concentrated upon these two forms in the following analysis.

Romanesque carvings of sirens are, compared to later medieval examples, very much in the minority, even when considered with examples from elsewhere in the country (see footnote 1 above). Taken as a whole, these Romanesque images are fairly coherent in that none of them hold either a mirror or comb but simply raise their hands (Stow Longa, Long Marton, Durham Castle Chapel), lower their hands (Nately Scures), grasp a fish (Barfreston) or their twin tails (Rock). The carving at Nately Scures does appear with an item that could be a mirror, but this is carved so that it appears to sprout from her tail. Romanesque carvings of mermaids from the continent suggest that the grasping the tail pose was popular, particularly with twin tails curved up either side of the body (see, for examples, Leclerq-Kadaner, 1997: 216, 222-24, 248, 251-52, 258, 260, 266, 269-72), a posture also adopted by the mermen on the font at St Peter's, Cambridge.

A sample of 23 images of later medieval (mid-thirteenth to early-sixteenth centuries) mermaids from the south of England reveals that the commonest attributes are the mirror and comb and to a lesser extent the mirror held on its own (see Fig. A2. 10). 8). This substantiates the assertion that the mirror and comb did not become a standard feature of mermaid iconography 'until the fourteenth century' (Gilbert, 2000: 659-660). The comb occurs alone only once. Interestingly none of the examples of mermen from the region hold either mirror or comb which suggests that both were closely identified with the female rather than the male fish-siren.[5] Images

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[5] A rare example of a merman holding a mirror occurs carved on a misericord at the Priory Church of St Mary and St Michael in Great Malvern (Worcestershire). However, the figure is paired with a mermaid who holds a comb (Remnant, 1969: 168).

of mermen are far less frequent than those of mermaids and typically partner mermaids or other figures.

In contrast to the continental sculptures of Romanesque date the form assumed by later medieval mermaids and mermen in the south of England is predominantly single-tailed. Twin-tailed figures do occur but tend to date to the early sixteenth century (e.g. Canterbury, Christchurch, Crowcombe). The most usual way for the mermaid to wear her hair is loose and long, typically to the waist. Shoulder-length or bound hair is much less frequent and no hair at all is rare. Crowns only appear on very late medieval examples (e.g. Canterbury). In contrast, later medieval examples of bird-sirens are typically portrayed with their hair bound or wrapped, in contrast to their Romanesque predecessors. Partially foliate bodies may, however, be found with both fish- and bird-siren form.

The mermaid is therefore not a static image in medieval architectural sculpture. While both Romanesque and late medieval carvings commonly depict them with long hair and raised hands only the later examples are associated with mirror and comb. Single tails characterise the late medieval English examples while double tails are more a continental Romanesque and then a Renaissance motif.

Dark Sisters: Classical and Medieval Sirens in Art and Lore

Given the medieval propensity to depict the siren in semi-fish form it is perhaps surprising that it was only towards the end of the 7th century that the figure really began to be associated with piscean characteristics (Faral, 1953: 433). In Isidore's *Etymologies* (7th century AD), "siren" still denotes a creature that is part-woman, part-bird, with wings and claws. Sirens with the form of a fish rather than a bird make one of their first appearances in the *Liber Monstrorum*, an Anglo-Latin work dating to the century c.650-c.750 AD and probably the product of a Wessex school in the period of Aldhelm (Herren, 1998: 101; Orchard, 1995: 86-7). Essentially a catalogue of

almost 120 monstrosities divided into three books, the *Liber Monstrorum* describes sirens as

> sea-girls, who deceive sailors with the outstanding beauty of their appearance
> and the sweetness of their song, and are most like human beings from the
> head to the navel, with the body of a maiden, but have scaly fishes' tails, with
> which they always lurk in the sea (Bk I.6, Orchard, 1995: 263).

By the tenth century sirens with pisciform characteristics were becoming increasingly common in manuscript illuminations and sometimes they appeared alongside avian Sirens. Other Sirens combined feathered wings and talons with scaled tails and fins, as for example the trio in the Morgan Bestiary or the image in the early twelfth-century bestiary of Phillip de Thaun, the latter, however, without wings (Benton, 1992: 19; Druce, 1915: 171, see also plate VIII). This fluidity of bird and fish attributes meant that while some bestiary manuscripts presented images of sirens with fish tails, the accompanying text describes their form as human from the head to the naval, while their 'lower parts down to their feet are like birds' (Barber, 1992: 8, 150). Both types are found among Romanesque architectural sculpture (Jalabert, 1936; Baltrušaitis, 1986: 68-73). Although sirens with bird wings and fish tails persisted in ecclesiastical art throughout the medieval period (for example the fifteenth-century roof boss in the chancel of St Barnabas, Queen Camel, Somerset), in general, from the mid- to late-twelfth century onwards the fish-woman siren became the norm in western civilisation (Druce, 1937: 94; Faral, 1953: 502-506; Lucie-Smith, 1991: 252).

Classical writers who described the sirens, however, always gave avian characteristics and it is in bird form that the siren may be found in the works of Apollodorus, Aelian, Ovid, Hyginus, Eustathius, and Pausanius (Berman, 1987: 148). This was not necessarily always in the form of a human head on the body of a bird; Apollodorus, for example, describes the sirens as avian from the thighs down (*ibid.*). In early representations both male and female sirens existed, but from the sixth century BC

onward images of female sirens began to predominate making it almost impossible to distinguish them from harpies in much classical art.

In classical mythology the sirens were associated with irresistable music and death. The song of the sirens was perceived as mesmeric, luring sailors towards the perilous waters and rocks surrounding their island where the ships would perish.[6] The sirens might then feast upon the dead and their rocky island was supposed to be littered with human remains. In one of their earliest literary representations, Homer's *Odyssey* (c. 720 BC), Odysseus's crew plug their ears while Odysseus is himself tied to the mast of the ship so that he may hear the siren's song and not be driven to dive into the deadly waters (bk.12). In Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica*, composed in the third 3rd century BC, Jason and his crew are saved by Orpheus who drowns out the siren song by playing his lyre. The close association between sirens and music means that classical representations of sirens commonly play musical instruments to accompany their song, a reference that some medieval images also incorporated (a misericord at Boston [Lincolnshire], for example, depicts a mermaid playing a single pipe to a figure in a boat [Druce, 1915: pl. XI, fig. 1]).

Yet siren music was *not* worldly music, as the medieval moralists would lead us to believe. Plato equated their song with 'pure knowledge, the music of the spheres' that sustained the universe (King, 1995: 148). Hence the

> power of their music is not inhuman or destructive; as souls depart from this
> world to the next, so it seems, and drift uncertainly after death, it creates in
> them a passionate love for the heavenly and divine, and forgetfulness of
> mortality; it possesses them and enchants them with its spell, so that in

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[6] It is suggested that the name siren derives from 'the oriental root šir meaning fascination, and it is interesting to note that Simonides is reputed to have described Pisistratus as a Siren because he lured men to their doom' (Pollard, 1965: 143). This connection with fascination may well go some way towards explaining the use of the siren as an apotropaic image upon Roman temples (Van Buren, 1914: 192; Strong, 1914: 164) and as portable amulets (Elworthy, 1958: 356-357; Berry, 1968: fig. 3; DiStasi, 1981: 42). Related figures such as the harpies and the head of Medusa were similarly used.

joyfulness they follow the Sirens and join them in their circuits (Plutarch, cited in de Rachewiltz, 1987: 146).

To the living, however, the music is a dangerous melody, drawing out the soul into direct experience of the sublime core of the cosmos. Hence the sirens personify the kind of music 'that could only be heard by adepts in a state of ecstasy', an association which probably explains their presence on tombs and other funerary monuments, an alliance well established by the end of the fifth-century BC (Pollard, 1952: 63). Certainly, sirens could represent a kind of chthonic divinity. That they 'were sometimes regarded as representing emissaries or omens or as tokens or familiars of other world powers seems clear from their associations with divinities in general, but with the more sinister and primeval goddesses in particular' such as Artemis, Hera, Athena, and Persephone (*ibid.* 1965: 140). Sirens, like harpies, were otherworldly beings, conveyors of souls to the next world.

Christianity emphasized the siren's irresistability and set about transforming the supernatural elements of the mythos into worldly ones, painting her as fatal seductress and exaggerating her sexuality. By the twelfth century, the classical mythology of the siren had been fully Christianised and incorporated into ecclesiastical art via bestiaries (McGuire, 1997: 100). In bestiary narratives, sirens were 'deadly creatures' whose sweet song lures seafaring men towards them (Barber, 1992: 150). Hypnotised thus, the sirens force themselves upon the sailors, who, if they fail to reciprocate, are ripped apart and devoured (Hassig, 1999b: 79). For the bestiary moralists sirens represented the perilous pleasures of physical life whose temptations, for the sake of one's immortal soul, must be resisted. Significantly, bestiary texts often identified sirens as aquatic harlots (the word used is *meretrice*),[7] and the mermaid was widely popular as an emblem of libidinous passion (Lucie-Smith,

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[7] There were many meanings attached to the word meretrix, and to simply translate the term as "prostitute" omits much of the medieval way of looking at things. 'Medieval writers do not necessarily mean "one who exchanges specific sex acts for money" when they use words such as meretrix (the most common Latin word that is generally translated as "prostitute")' (Karras, 1996: 11). However, it is closely related to sexual activity outside of marriage, or by unmarried women.

1991: 252). This carried diabolic overtones. Marbod of Rennes (c.1035-1123) wrote

that the siren 'entices fools by singing lovely melodies, draws them towards her once

they are enticed, and when they are drawn in she plunges them into the annihilating

abyss' (Blamires, 1992: 102). He cautions men to 'beware the honied poisons, the

sweet songs and the pull of the dark depths' that the siren and her everyday

counterpart, woman, embody (ibid.). By the later Middle Ages the mermaid had

become associated in literature with temptation, flattery and pride (Betcher, 1996;

Houwen, 1997).

The cousins to the sirens, the harpies, suffered a similar fate.[8] Harpies were female

spirits in the form of winged women, sometimes with talons for feet, or with avian

bodies and the head or head and breasts of a woman, and occasionally arms.

Etymologically the name derives from the Greek verb *harpazein*, to snatch, which

relates to their activities as the spirits of storm winds, carrying off anyone 'whom the

gods wished to cause to disappear' (Rowland, 1987: 155). Overwhelmingly, harpies

are portrayed as negative, an interpretation given wide circulation via the Roman poet

Virgil. Gluttony was the foremost quality with which harpies were associated in the

first century BC and the harpy stood as an emblem of insatiable appetite throughout

the Middle Ages, particularly associated with the sins of greed and avarice.

Aspects of Siren Imagery in Medieval Architectural Sculpture

Whilst the orthodox narrative suggests that sirens in medieval culture were warnings

against lust and sensuality in general, close analysis of the figures in architectural

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[8] In many respects sirens and harpies are similar – both have knowledge of the future and
both have links with the underworld, sirens through their association with Persephone,
harpies because they 'snatch' the soul and take it to Hades. Yet in others they are
diametrically opposed, despite their similar bird-woman form, sirens being associated with
beautiful song and perfume, harpies with discordant screeching and a foul stench. Links
between harpies, sirens and other monstrous female beings are common in classical
mythology (e.g. Graves, 1960: I, 127-130). Such closeness allowed a considerable degree of
fluidity in visual representation (Harrison, 1903: 179).

sculpture suggests that much of the supernatural aspect of the siren was preserved. At this point it is worth examining some crucial aspects of the image in more detail.

Hair

In many cultures hair is regarded as a carrier of potentially dangerous magical powers (Leach, 1958: 157-159). Abundant and loose hair like that of the mermaid 'is usually a characteristic of "wild" supernatural beings, and corresponds in part to the feather-dress of the Swan-maiden, in that it represents a crucial link to the "wilderness"/otherworld' (de Rachewiltz, 1987: 109-110). Unbound hair was also considered immoral and was commonly used to portray similarly perceived characters such as the Great Whore of Babylon (Wright, 1997).

As I have already established, contrary to mermaids, bird-sirens in the region are usually depicted in medieval architectural sculpture not with flowing hair but wearing headdresses. Elaborate and in particular twin-peaked or horned headdresses, like long unbound hair, were believed to be conducive to immorality and were satirized along with other 'dangerous' women's fashions such as low necklines, exposed midriffs, and long trains (Jones, 1990: 69). Writing in the early sixteenth century, the poet Alexander Barclay connects them with pride and folly (Scattergood, 1987: 267) while sermons were often directed against them and fashionable clothes in general (Owst, 1933: 393-404). Graffiti on a pillar in the north aisle of the church of St Peter in Stetchworth (Cambridgeshire) shows the upper body of a woman with an exaggerated headdress and low cut neckline, placing her right hand upon her left breast. The headdress, consisting of two oversized bound coils of hair on each side of the head, is of the type alluded to by the Exeter harpy misericord mentioned above.

Corroborating this connection between fashionable headgear, women, and predatory birds, a further graffito at Stetchworth depicts an owl in an enormous twin peaked headdress (Pritchard, 1967: 58-59). The choice of the owl as model for the headdress

may be random; yet as a nocturnal predator it had been connected with the harpy-figure for centuries. Originally an ambivalent creature connected with the storm winds and the passage from death to new life, classical literature emphasized the seductress/snatcher aspects of the harpy, and it was as a diabolic avian temptress that the figure entered Christian folklore. Close parallels exist with the Semitic deities/demons Lamashtû and the "screech-owl" Lilith as well as the Graeco-Roman Stringes or Striges, child-stealing, magical, bloodsucking female demons with the body of a bird and the head of a seductive woman (Hurwitz, 1999: 45). The owl is connected to these diabolic figures. Hurwitz compares the names for the owl together with their various alternative meanings in a number of European dialects, concluding that 'in all languages, so to speak, the word means a witch on the one hand and a predatory night owl on the other' (*ibid.* 47-48). If the graffito at Stetchworth is anything to go by the folkloric association between the owl and dangerous female beings extended to what were perceived as symbols of female seductiveness, such as the headdress.

In medieval architectural sculpture the presence of elaborate headdresses is often accompanied by imagery that emphasizes sin or the demonic. On the north side of the choir stalls at St Mary's in Minster-in-Thanet (Kent) a misericord carving represents a demon between the exaggerated horns of the headdress worn by a woman, grasping each side with its claws (Grössinger, 1997b: 89, pl. 126). Within the same series is an image Remnant describes as a 'Bird-siren wearing a hennin', on either side of which appears a draconopede ('a snake with female head wearing a hennin, perhaps an allusion to the Virgin-headed Serpent of the Fall of Man') (Remnant, 1969: 73). In this image the connection is plain, the headdress appearing as part of the iconography of the Fall as well as adorning the head of a bird-siren or harpy.

The theme is reiterated among a number of sculptures from sites further west. A roof boss in the thirteenth-century crossing tower Bishop's Cannings depicts a female head wearing a twin-peaked headdress, between the "horns" of which and to one side are demonic grinning heads (Fig. 8. 15). At St Mary's, Devizes, a gargoyle on

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Figure 8. 15 Roof boss in the crossing tower at Bishop's Cannings carved with a woman wearing a twin-peaked headdress with trailing streamers. Demonic heads appear to the left and in the centre.

Figure 8. 16. A demon grabs a woman's headdress. Gargoyle on the southeast corner of the south porch at St Mary's, Devizes.

the south-east corner of the late medieval south porch presents a demi-figure of a woman in a large squarish headdress which is seized from the side by a ferocious, hairy quadruped beast with its mouth open (Fig. 8. 16). Although extensively developed in the later Middle Ages the association between attractive headgear and devilry was not a new one, as the Romanesque corbel-table at Priston illustrates. Here, a sequence of thirteen corbels above the entrance to the nave is distinguished by what appears to be a deliberate placement – there are three "pairs" of carvings that mimic each other. One of these pairs is a couple of horned heads, the former being the head of human figure with an open mouth, the other the head of a woman in a horned headdress with her mouth open.

The Raised Hands Gesture

Upraised arms is one of the crucial gestures held in common by Romanesque and later medieval sculptures of mermaids. This is a pose shared with a number of other figures. In discussing the characteristic raised arm gesture of the classical figure Baubo, Lubell states:

> The posture of women standing with upraised arms, the gesture of mourning, is very ancient and is understood throughout the Mediterranean area as a sign of reverence for the dead. It is also an ancient gesture signifying the appearance of a divine or supernatural being, an epiphany (1994: 84-85).

Imbued with magical significance this posture can be found in many ancient images to 'personify either a divine being, a blessing, or simply a greeting between a divinity and a worshipper; but in some archaic cultures [for example the Sumerian and Babylonian] it was used to identify a goddess' (*ibid.* 85-86).

Whilst the gesture appears among the earliest carvings of mermaids (e.g. Durham Castle Chapel) it is also common in late medieval examples, especially those that hold both mirror and comb. Very few examples of mermaids with these two attributes are

actually depicted using them; instead the postures suggest that the mirror and comb are simply additions to this established pose of the mermaid.

Mirror, Comb and Crown

I have already drawn attention to the apparent absence of mirror and comb as attributes of mermaids in Romanesque architectural sculpture and the popularity of both by the later medieval period. In this section I want to address this change in imagery by exploring the associations of these objects. That the mirror and comb were so closely associated with the mermaid by the fifteenth century suggests that the meanings they articulated were thought appropriate. This might be because of their association with powerful supernatural beings; yet the connection with vanity and luxury is just as likely for despite being intimate tokens of love (Camille, 1998b: 54-61) both mirror and comb were commonly interpreted as negative emblems denoting excessive vanity (Kosmer, 1975: 1; Friedman, 1977; Barb, 1966: Pl. 1a; Wright, 1997).

Mirrors are closely associated with a number of pagan deities (Hutchins, 1968: 6) but both mirror and comb are explicitly connected with one, the Roman Goddess of love, Venus. Druce notes that in the gallery of casts at the British Museum there is a mosaic pavement from a Roman villa at Halicarnassus, probably of the third century BC that 'shows Venus rising from the sea supported by a pair of female tritons or mermaids, who have curled fish tails. Venus holds a mirror in one hand, her locks in the other' (Druce, 1915: 174-175). It is not far from this collection of images – Venus holding her hair and a mirror, with accompanying mermaids – to the medieval mermaid with long loose hair who holds a mirror and a comb. The Greek word for one of the attributes of Venus, the scallop shell, *Kteis*, means (like the Latin *Pecten*) comb, and was used for various other objects with projecting teeth as well as for the female genitals (Barb, 1953: 205). In classical art the scallop shell appears with images of Venus more frequently than her sacred animal, the dolphin, and Egyptian terracottas of Graeco-Roman date show Venus holding the shell over her genitalia

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(*ibid.*). A close connection between Venusian and mermaid imagery persisted throughout the later medieval period (Twycross, 1972: 89-96).

The siren in classical legend could be considered a supernatural death messenger, much like the Banshee in Irish folklore. The Banshee is closely associated with the comb; indeed, traditional belief in parts of Ireland suggest that the comb is 'her most cherished possession' (Lysaght, 1986: 154). Detailed study of Irish folklore shows that the vast majority of comb legends connected with the figure are recorded in the central and south-eastern areas of the country, the comb motif lacking in the south-west and north-west. These latter areas are, however, rich in mermaid legends, which also do not occur in the areas where the banshee comb motif does (*ibid.* 159, 162). Thus the two figures co-exist to a remarkable degree.

A well-known medieval legend from France strengthens the link between banshee and siren by presenting a serpent-siren in the banshee's role of herald of death. All the stories connected with Melusine or Melusina, the mermaid of Lusignan, were collected and compiled by Jean d'Arras and published in his *Chronicle* of 1387. The main legend relates how

> Raymond, the adopted son of Emmerich, Count of Poitou, lost his way, and
> his companions, when hunting in the forest, and came upon a fountain,
> beside which sat three beautiful maidens. He promptly lost his heart to the
> loveliest, Melusina, and secured her promise to marry him, which she gave on
> the condition that she should spend each Saturday in complete privacy. To
> this unusual request Raymond willingly agreed, and Melusina, who possessed
> great power and wealth, married him in the magnificent castle which was her
> wedding gift to her husband, reminding him of his promise never to intrude
> upon her on Saturdays (Benwell and Waugh, 1961: 79).

Many years passed in marital harmony until Raymond, responding to rumours concerning Melusina's weekly seclusion, stole into her chamber one Saturday; 'There in the bath sat Melusina, and the horrified man saw that her slender legs had changed

into the tail of a monstrous fish or serpent' (*ibid.*). Although Raymond concealed his knowledge from his wife she eventually found out about his prying and fled through a window. For many years 'the French believed that Melusina was to be heard wailing over the ramparts of Lusignan just before the death of one of its lords. When the family became extinct, she transferred her attentions to the royal family and appeared whenever a King of France was about to die' (*ibid.*).

It is possible that the crown as an attribute of the siren came from eastern Europe, where bird-sirens had become identified with the phoenix and other firebirds who have as an attribute a nimbus or a crown (de Rachewiltz, 1987: 108-109). Another possibility is that it is connected to 'the negative symbolism of the crown of *superbia*' (*ibid.*). Allegorical representations of the Seven Deadly Sins use the crown as symbol of pride and 'worn by the mermaid, this crown probably stands for the overweaning pride of the heretic' (*ibid.* 109). Yet the positive symbolism of the crown suggests sovereignty and power and when worn by Mary, for example, signifies her role as Queen of Heaven (Cooper, 1978: 47; Hall, 1994: 116). It is interesting to note that the ancient Syrian goddess Atargatis (also known as Derceto) was worshipped as Queen of Heaven and Earth in the form of a mermaid (Lurker, 1987: 44; Johnson, 1994: 140). Mermaids wearing crowns typify Renaissance art and may well be connected to alchemical symbolism.

The Lion, the Serpent and the Tree

Carved misericords in the cathedrals at Wells (Somerset), Hereford (Herefordshire), Norwich (Norfolk), and the church of St Mary the Virgin, Edlesborough (Buckinghamshire) display the image of a mermaid suckling a lion. This has proved to be a vexing image for art historians whose traditional source of information on animals in medieval art – bestiaries – remain curiously silent with regard to such a juxtaposition. Scholars have acknowledged their bewilderment before advancing tentative interpretations. Taking her cue from bestiary models, Grössinger states:

As we have seen, the lion stands for both good and evil, Christ or the devil. Here, he is being nurtured by the mermaid, a creature half-animal, half-human, and a symbol of pride. Unless it is another image of the world upside-down, the lion must surely be sucking in negative qualities, such as vanity and pride (Grössinger, 1997b: 141).

Writing in 1949 Burnell advanced the idea that the presence of the lion as well as the fish may be 'misunderstood survivals from a very ancient art-tradition in connection with Artemis' (1949: 205). Burnell's guesswork, however, carries some degree of truth. Whilst Artemis may well be a distant relation Terra or Tellus, the Roman earth goddess or personification of the earth, is, in terms of imagery at least, much closer. Typically represented naked or only partially clothed, suckling two human figures or animals and holding foliage or associated with trees, the image of Terra, like many other pagan deities, entered medieval art (den Hartog, 1996: 38-41; 1999: 325-327).

As goddess of the earth Terra was closely associated with vegetation and beasts symbolic of the life force of the natural world. Such connections meant that Terra became closely aligned with the image-pool of the Tree of Life (see chapter 5). Serpentine and leonine creatures, as well as foliage, are attributes of Terra. The image among the twelfth-century capitals in the westwork gallery of the church of St Servius in Maastricht represents Terra as 'a more or less nude woman in an awkward posture, clasping in each arm a branch of foliage, while suckling two serpents' (den Hartog, 1996: 38). On another capital, also in Maastricht (the church of Our Lady), Terra is represented entangled in foliage and suckling a wyvern and a lion (den Hartog, 1999: 326). We may consider such carvings as strongly regenerative imagery resonant with the potency of nature, and indeed, both lion and serpent were associated with the resurrective power of Christ in bestiary manuscripts (White, 1984 [1954]: 187-188; Wheatcroft, 1999: 143). In addition the wyvern as well as the cross appear on Norman shields in the Bayeux Tapestry suggesting that 'the former was thought of in a favourable light as a symbol of strength and power' (Wood, 1997: 5).

This relationship between Terra and the Tree of Life and attendant beasts is important for it has considerable bearing upon the figure of the mermaid suckling serpents or lions in Romanesque and Gothic architectural carving. It has been suggested that the mermaid engaged in nursing these creatures is likely to have resulted from considerable confusion in the minds of medieval artists when faced with examples of Terra in classical art (Leclerq-Kadaner, 1975: 39). As personification of the earth, Terra, accompanied by a serpent and cornucopia, often partnered Okeanos, the god of the sea. But Okeanos could also be represented with Tethys, the personification of the fertile ocean and mother to thousands of cloud, mist and riverine nymphs. The postures and attributes of Terra and Tethys are therefore likely to have been combined; certainly the mermaid suckling serpents or lions suggests a fusion of Terran and Tethysian characteristics, as do those mermaids whose bodies are partially foliate (as the examples at Stoodleigh, Exeter, Lacock, and Cheriton Bishop demonstrate).

As well as being closely linked with the mermaid suckling a lion, the figure of Terra is the likely prototype of the naked woman suckling snakes, or, as it has become known, the *femme aux serpents* or *luxuria* (Janson, 1952: 64, n83; Leclercq-Kadaner, 1975). The development of such a figure introduced a different perception still: these animals were not so much being nourished but devouring the 'sinful' parts of the body. This view proposes that the purpose underlying this imagery, in its manifold varieties, is 'to expose the moral view that sexual laxity is evil and will be visited by the most dire punishments' (Weir and Jerman, 1986: 61). Those 'who follow Venus' are henceforth punished 'through the organs by which they sinned' (Kosmer, 1975: 4). While this is a persuasive argument, with plenty of supporting evidence that underlines the negative opinion of serpents and increasingly morbid attitude toward sexuality that contemporary churchmen had (e.g.Weir and Jerman, 1986: 64-66; Kosmer, 1975: 4, nn14-16), it may well be far too simplistic. Janson notes that while the image occurs in visual form from the late eleventh century, there are no direct references to it until the thirteenth:

The earliest written mention of it that I was able to find is in the *Speculum laicorum*, where Saint Germain of Auxerre is said to have tracked a snake to the tomb of an adulteress. A fourteenth century interpolation among the *exempla* of Jacques de Vitry tells of a man who in a vision sees his dead mother with two snakes biting her breasts; she tells him she is being punished for adultery. In the *Gesta Romanorum* ... there is another version of this tale explaining the snake as the two infants murdered by their mother. All this affords an excellent illustration of the frequently neglected fact that iconographic motifs in mediaeval art do not necessarily presuppose a literary source but can themselves become a source of literary themes (Janson, 1952: 66 n102).

The interpretation of the *femme aux serpents* as an adulteress is possibly a later medieval development, the motif initially another incorporation of a pagan figure into the Romanesque repertoire.

Text-based interpretations suggest further negative possibilities. The images of Terra on the capitals in the churches at St Servius and Our Lady in Maastricht seem 'to have been conceived as a deliberate antitype to Christ, for whereas His trampling of the beasts [the reference is to Psalm 91: 13] pertains to salvation, the suckling of the very same creatures is likely to refer to the very opposite, i.e. the Fall of Man' (den Hartog, 1999: 326). De Rachewiltz notes that the majority of bird-sirens in Romanesque art have a serpent's tail, 'which links them to the tempting snake in the garden of Eden'. By this means, 'the Church produced a powerful symbol for the danger of seduction in general but particularly of a verbal sort' (de Rachewiltz, 1987: 98). The Eden serpent was often depicted in medieval art in draconopedal form – i.e. with the head and upper body of a human and the body of a serpent from the waist down. More importantly for this discussion, the upper body was often represented as that of a beautiful woman, like a siren. Ancient examples of hybrid female human-serpents exist in Greek mythology in the figures of Echidne and Lamia, the former famed for her eating of men and production of monstrous children (including Cerberus, the Hydra and the Sphinx), the latter a child-killing demon similar to Lilith.

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Both Echidne and Lamia are described as beautiful women from the head to the waist, while from the waist down they took the form of a speckled serpent. Alternatively Lamia was depicted as a creature with the body of a snake and the head of a beautiful woman (Graves, 1960, I: 130, 205; Hurwitz, 1999: 43; Begg, 1996: 40; Leinweber, 1994: 77). Yet it is as Lilith, Semitic producer of demons, personification of the diabolic Eden serpent and the temptress of the tempter Eve, that the draconopede finds its way into medieval art, coiled around the trunk of the Tree of Knowledge (Kemp-Welch, 1902: 984-986; Flores, 1996: 175, fig. 1).

The complex imagery of the temptress is perhaps best expressed in the seductive, sinuous body of the female Eden serpent whose sisterhood included the siren (herself occasionally serpentine, as at Lullington and Barfreston) and the sphinx, the latter a potential influence upon the womanized Eden serpent and of course, according to Hesiod, daughter of Echidne herself (Kelly, 1971: 313). Draconopedal form helped to explain a physiological difficulty in the book of Genesis, namely how the serpent could talk to Eve, while the image of a serpent with a human face provided 'on the most general level, a wealth of associations with fraud and temptation' (Friedman, 1966: 25; 1972: 115). Yet as Janson cautions (above), we must be wary of applying textual interpretations to this imagery, for in doing so the architectural and social contexts are overlooked.

Conclusion

Clearly, the medieval siren articulated a complex network of associations. An image inherited from classical mythology via bestiaries and epics, the siren resonates with Hellenic, Oriental, and Roman pagan characteristics as a figure closely connected with the passage from death to the place of new life. Overlying this dark divinity is a negative moral dialogue accentuated by Christian concerns with appropriate sexuality and the danger of feminine allure. Yet the siren and her relations are too ambiguous to be neatly explained as wholly secular, even within the framework of medieval

Christianity, the image preserving many aspects that point towards her numinous, if terrible, status. Integrating death and life, human and fish or bird, serpent or lion into one image the siren embodies the liminality that is the hallmark of the grotesque; they are 'the monstrous manifestations of religious notions notoriously hard to express' (Pollard: 1965: 137).

Chapter 9

Entertainers and Exhibitionists

Introduction

The final section to this triad of chapters considers the entertainer and exhibitionist figures that are found throughout medieval architectural sculpture. While the pairing of the two may seem an unusual one this was not the case in the medieval period: fools commonly performed in the nude, as did acrobats and tumblers.

Acrobats and Tumblers

One of the most common ways of representing acrobats in medieval architectural sculpture is the feet-to-ears posture: the body is contorted so that the legs make a 'V' shape, and the head of the figure appears between them. Weir and Jerman suggest that feet-to-ears acrobats are 'a development of the squatter, for they simply straighten the leg and thrust it upwards, held by the hand if necessary' (1986: 43). This posture is common in Romanesque corbel-tables (for example, Romsey Abbey and Winchester Cathedral) as well as later medieval carvings such as the fifteenth-century roof bosses at Lacock Abbey in Wiltshire (Fig. 9. 1).

Such a pose is ideally suited for the representation of exhibitionist figures and is often used accordingly, two particularly clear examples existing on the exteriors of the churches at Sopley in Hampshire and Stinsford in Dorset. At the former the sculpture appears on a corbel placed on the north-west corner of the thirteenth-century north transept and is carved so that the body is horizontal and only the head,

Figure 9. 1 Roof boss carved as a tumbler in the south cloister walk at Lacock Abbey.

Figure 9. 2 Male exhibitionist figure carved as a corbel on the exterior of the north transept at Sopley in Hampshire.

placed on the corner, turned upright (Fig 9. 2). The figure has long straight hair and a beard upon the chin, a damaged broad nose and ears that stick out from each side of the head. The legs are held upright and close to the body, the feet behind the head and each hand gripping the back of each thigh. A large scrotum hangs downward over the back of his right thigh and the penis is erect against the lower part of his belly. On the opposite corner of the transept there is a heavily damaged female figure that was once possibly exhibitionist as well (discussed below and see Fig 9. 16). At Stinsford the carving is more squarely within the Romanesque tumbler tradition, carved as it is upright and as part of a sequence of fifteenth-century gargoyles and grotesques placed upon the exterior of the south nave aisle (Fig. 9. 3a). The head of this grinning tumbler appears between the two upturned legs, the left hand visible holding the underside of the left thigh. The buttocks and genital area have been badly damaged, but enough scar material remains to suggest that this was once a male exhibitionist figure.

Female parallels to these figures have been classified as sheela-na-gigs, despite the fact that sheelas in the head between legs pose are rare, if not non-existent, tending instead to be carved in a squatting posture. Thus the two roof bosses in the west cloister walk at Wells Cathedral that have been identified as sheela-na-gigs (McMahon and Roberts, 2001: 167) actually belong more to this tumbler/acrobat tradition, one of which is carved in the head between legs pose, the other as a naked gymnast figure. Related female figures are the twin-tailed mermaids who hold each tail up on either side of their bodies often exposing their genitalia, examples of which are common in continental Romanesque architectural sculpture (see, for examples, Leclerq-Kadaner, 1997).

Although this posture is a common way of carving tumblers, it is by no means the only one and figures may appear in a variety of contorted positions. Romanesque corbel-tables are once again among the most profitable locations in which to look and two examples are worth mentioning here. The first is a carving on the north side of the nave at Studland in Dorset (Fig. 9. 3b) representing a female tumbler who is bent so far backwards that the head appears upside-down between the knees (one of

Figure 9. 3 (a and b) Exhibitionist acrobat figures from (a) the east end of the south aisle at Stinsford, and (b) the north side of the nave at Studland.

Figure 9. 4 Two tumblers together or a figure giving birth? Corbel on the north side of the north nave aisle at Romsey Abbey.

the Wells Cathedral bosses mentioned above may be representing something similar). Her genitals are clearly visible above her head, and the carving is positioned close to at least one sheela-na-gig. The second example may be found on the exterior of the north nave aisle at Romsey Abbey and either represents two tumblers together, or a figure giving birth, the head of the child visible between the legs (Fig. 9. 4). The squatting position of the main figure echoes the position of sheela-na-gigs and indeed, this corbel is sited in close proximity to the Romsey sheela on the west face of the north transept (see below).

Male Exhibitionist Figures

Romanesque corbel-tables, particularly those on the continent, often feature male exhibitionist figures among their repertoire of carved images. In the south of England examples may be found at Studland and St John's, Devizes. At Studland the image is located on the south side of the nave and appears as a squatting figure with a scrotum of generous proportions, his hands resting at the base of his (missing) penis itself 'formerly of heroic diameter' (Lundgren and Thurlby, 1999: 6) (Fig. 9. 5a). The head of the figure, in common with Romanesque work elsewhere, is disproportionately large in comparison to the rest of the body and like the figure between serpents at Little Langford (Fig. 6. 15) wears a moustache. The Devizes example may be found on the exterior north side of the chancel of St John's church and is paired with a sheela-na-gig, both figures positioned frontally to the viewer (although the male is slightly angled away from his partner). Despite some damage to the sandstone through weathering and pollution the face is remarkably well preserved; less pristine is the lower half of the body although the figure clearly grasps his erect penis in his right hand (Fig. 9. 5b).

There are numerous similarities between these figures. Already mentioned in relation to the figure at Studland is the oversized head in proportion to the rest of the body which enters the figure into the associations carried by the severed head motif
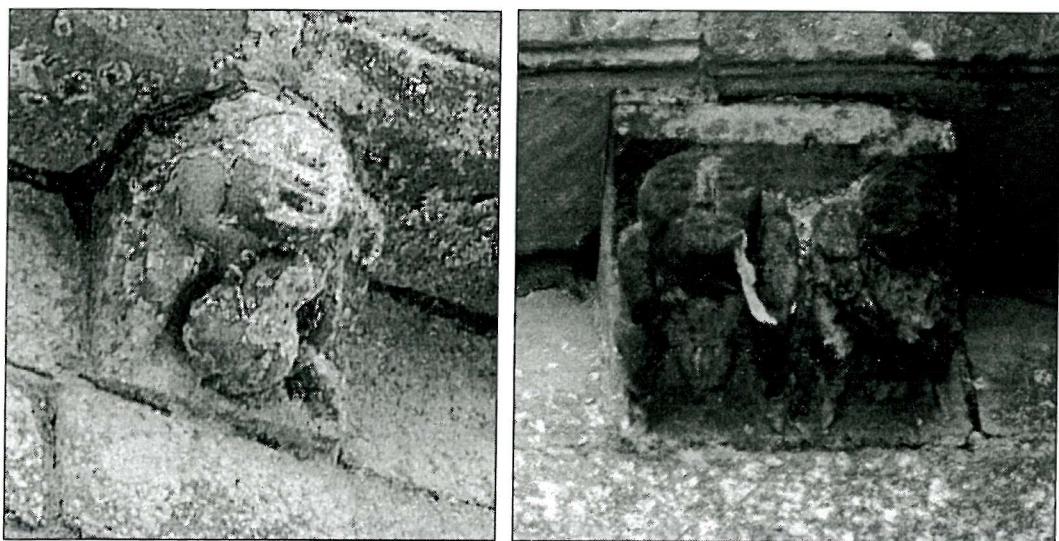
Figure 9. 5 (a and b) Carved corbels from (a) Studland (left) and (b) St John's, Devizes (right).

Figure 9. 6 Crouching male figure set into the east end of the chancel at Abson.

discussed in chapter 4. One of the main qualities associated with the severed head is its apotropaic power, which in these figures is further enhanced by other characteristics: at Studland, disproportionately large genitalia; at Devizes, an erection, and at Little Langford the brandishing of serpents that coil their bodies around the figure's thighs. The use of the phallus as an amuletic (warding off evil) and talismanic (attracting good fortune) motif was prominent in Roman life and expressed in numerous media such as sculpture, jewellery, mosaic, and wall-painting (for references see chapter 4 note 1). Romanesque artists are likely to have been aware of this everyday use of the phallus in classical art and architecture, for apotropaic associations remained with both male and female genitalia throughout the Middle Ages (Jones, 2000a: 99).

Paired exhibitionist figures like those on the corbel at Devizes, although relatively uncommon, are not unknown elsewhere. At the church of St Mary and St Michael at Whittlesford in Cambridgeshire there is a sheela and a male exhibitionist figure carved upon the irregular shaped block of stone that forms the arch of a round-headed window on the south side of the crossing tower. The male figure is represented in profile on all fours with an elongated torso, short legs bent at the knees, and an erect penis. The head of the figure appears directly above the left shoulder of the sheela, as if whispering in her ear. This position is shared by a carved male figure at the church of St James, Abson (Gloucestershire), set into the east wall of the chancel (Fig. 9. 6). Just like the Whittlesford image the Abson figure represents a male in profile on all fours with an erect penis, only in this example there is no exhibiting female figure paired with him. Dates for these two images are difficult to ascertain. Although the block of stone that forms the top of the window at Whittlesford may well be contemporaneous with the style of the arch which cuts through it and therefore Romanesque, it is equally possible that the block is of later date and inserted into the tower to replace earlier stonework. The figure at Abson is more securely in situ, carved from the same red sandstone from which most of the chancel is built. From this contextual evidence it is possible to assign a thirteenth-century date to the figure.

Couples might also be represented on Romanesque corbels as embracing or copulating pairs, examples of which may be found in the region among the corbel-tables at Studland, Devizes (St John), Lullington and Winchester. Interestingly, three examples make visual reference to animals. At Winchester the corbel depicts two dogs copulating face to face.

The quadrupedal posture of the male exhibitionist figures at Whittlesford and Abson might have been intended to introduce an animal aspect into the carvings, to link sexuality with animality. In some later medieval male exhibitionist figures this beast aspect is even more explicit. Two carvings – one at Mere (Wiltshire) (Fig. 7. 7) and one at Brent Knoll (Somerest) – represent exhibiting hybrid human-animal male figures. The pattern for both carvings is similar: the torso of a human male is combined with the head of a beast carved in typical flamboyant later medieval style with shaggy hair, wide staring eyes and enormous gaping mouth. In both cases the head is unnaturally large in comparison to the body, a feature common to gargoyle and grotesque carvings in the south of England which suggests that these carvings are related to the earlier corbel-tables and the concept of the severed head and its associated pool of ideas. Further, both examples do not appear to display their penises like all the figures mentioned so far, but rather cloak them behind other features: the figure at Mere, located on the interior north wall of the south (Bettesthorne) chapel extends a long tongue to lick his testes, the tongue thereby taking the place of the penis; the carving at Brent Knoll, located on the exterior east side of the west tower along with other grotesque figures has a small serpent or wingless dragon (worm) extending from the mouth, itself with its mouth open and extending its tongue to lick the figure's testicles. In both examples the penis is hidden or replaced by something else – a beast's tongue or a serpent/serpent's tongue. Undoubtedly there are subtle levels of meaning being explored here as well as a crude jocularity whose depth and richness is now difficult to grasp.

The last example I want to introduce here is to be found on the west face of the north transept at the church of St Mary, St Katherine and All Saints, Edington (Wiltshire) (Fig. 9. 7). Again, the carving represents a male exhibitionist, but one

unlike any so far presented: here the naked figure reclines in classical fashion, his genitals on full display. Unlike earlier figures the Edington image does not draw attention to his genitalia with his hands or through other gestures, and indeed, there is no erection or disproportionate body parts, such as the head. The overall impression is simply one of a naked male figure copied from life, carved and set in place sometime during the fourteenth century. Curiously, and this might be little more than coincidence, the location of the figure on the west face of the north transept parallels that of the Romanesque Sheela on the Benedictine nunnery at Romsey, the institution that owned Edington between 968 and 1539. Whether this connection extended to any influence upon decorative schemes it is, however, impossible to say.

Sheela-na-gigs

The figure known as the sheela-na-gig has already been mentioned in connection with the male exhibitionist figures at Devizes and Whittlesford as well as with some of the acrobat or tumbler carvings with which they are often confused. I have suggested that the sheela-na-gigs, 'carvings of naked females posed in a manner which displays and emphasises the genitalia' (Kelly, 1996: 5), may be distinguished from the positions assumed by the tumblers and acrobats by their typical frontal standing or squatting position with one or both hands placed on or next to the vulva. Further, while exhibitionist tumblers may be partially clothed and wearing a contemporary hairstyle the sheela-na-gig is always naked and with few exceptions, completely bald.

Beyond this, sheelas form a very distinct category within the broader scheme of exhibitionist figures and may be distinguished from them in a variety of other ways. First, while the acrobats and other exhibitionist carvings of the Romanesque and later Gothic period tend to be confined to architectural media such as corbel-tables or gargoyles, sheela-na-gigs, while often mingling with these figures, just as

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commonly occur on their own, carved on a separate stone that has been inserted into the wall of the building. This is a common feature of the carvings in Ireland and to a lesser extent in England where the image has undergone a much greater absorption into the repertoire of Romanesque carving. Second, and related to the above, it is often impossible to reliably date sheela-na-gig carvings. It must be assumed that those figures in corbel-tables are the same date as the rest of the sequence but the separate images, while they may be contemporary with the wall into which they are inserted are not necessarily so – the image may have been incorporated at a later date and come from elsewhere. These images prove the most resilient to even the broadest chronological frameworks. Third, unlike any other motif the image is not restricted to ecclesiastical sites, appearing as it does in Ireland on late medieval tower houses, castles and associated buildings, town walls and religious sites. Some of these locations are likely to be secondary contexts suggesting that this figure, unlike others, has acquired some degree of importance within the folklore and life of numerous Irish communities, something that it has not done in England. Thus there are different patterns of sheela-na-gig use in different areas of Britain in different periods of time.

Writers have long recognised this relative independence of the sheela motif within medieval architectural sculpture and accordingly, while there are no studies known to the author that concentrate upon stock figures of contemporary carving such as acrobatic figures or mouth-pullers, there are many articles and a few books on the sheela-na-gig. Throughout the nineteenth century antiquarians had been aware of these carvings but it was not until the 1920s and 1930s when medieval churches and medieval architecture became a favoured topic among archaeologists that the carvings really began to attract scholarly attention. To this period belong some of the first systematic analyses of the figures then currently known as well as reports of newly discovered carvings (see, for example, Murray, 1934; Guest, 1936, 1937; Hemp, 1938). Little work on the figures was published in the middle of the century, the next resurgence of interest being in the late sixties and seventies. The article by Hutchinson and Hutchinson (1969) collated information on the English figures while the first full-length book to appear, a version of the author's original PhD thesis,

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Figure 9. 7 The male figure on the north transept at Edington.

Figure 9. 8 The sheela-na-gig at Worth Matravers.

advanced toward engaging a popular rather than a purely academic audience (Andersen, 1977). Now long out of print this is still often referred to as the definitive work on the subject as more recent publications (e.g. Weir and Jerman, 1986; McMahon and Roberts, 2001) have added little to the debate.

In the south and west of England, sheelas can be found at Buncton (Sussex), Romsey Abbey (Hampshire), Binstead (Isle of Wight), Devizes (St John), Oaksey and Stanton St Quintin (Wiltshire), Fiddington and Stoke-sub-Hamdon (Somerset), Studland and Worth Matravers (Dorset), and South Tawton (Devon). They appear amongst the figures in corbel-tables and even carved as gargoyles, but also on their own as separate sculptures as the following text will now explore.

Sheela-na-gigs in Romanesque Corbel-Tables

English Romanesque corbel-tables not only provide numerous examples of sheela-na-gigs but provide reliable dating evidence. In the south and west of the country there are four examples of the image at four separate locations: Worth Matravers and Studland (Dorset), St John's, Devizes (Wiltshire), and two at Stoke-sub-Hamdon (Somerset), one of which is of Romanesque date, the other, fifteenth-century.

The church of St Nicholas at Worth Matravers is an early Norman building consisting of a west tower, nave and chancel, all of which date to c. 1100. The corbel-table which comprises 64 carved corbels running uninterrupted along the north and south sides of the nave and chancel, is believed to be authentic to the site and dates to the early twelfth century like the superstructure of the rest of the building. However, it is likely that large sections of corbels are not in their original early twelfth-century position due to the various rebuildings and restorations that have taken place in the later medieval and modern periods (RCHME, 1970a: 410-411; Alford, 1984: 6).

The sheela-na-gig is located on the exterior north side of the chancel, carved upon the sixth corbel in from the east and flanked by corbels carved with beast and beak heads (Fig. 9. 8). The figure appears in a characteristic squatting position with her legs parted to reveal the genitals, while her left arm reaches down between the legs and her right hand rests on the belly. The head of the figure is disproportionately large for the body and the feet are broad, almost disc-like. While the corbel may have been disturbed during the aforementioned rebuildings it is likely that parts of the north wall were left untouched. Hence it is entirely possible that the location of the corbels on this side, or at least some of them, represent their original situation.

The Worth Matravers sheela displays a number of similarities to one of the examples at the church of St John in Devizes (see below); before turning to look at this image, however, there is a sheela to be found only a few miles away at the church of St Nicholas at Studland (Fig. 9. 9). The building echoes the tripartite plan of Worth Matravers – tower, nave and chancel – except in this case the tower is an axial one, positioned between nave and chancel. The south porch dates to the nineteenth century. The corbel-table here is contemporary with the Romanesque superstructure of the building which dates to between 1125 and 1140 (Lundgren and Thurlby, 1999: 13).

The Studland carving is an unusual example of the sheela motif. The figure has no body, the head, tilted to one side, appearing at the top of the legs – like a gryllus. Between the legs is sculpted an enormous bulging vulva upon which the figure rests her left hand, passed beneath the thigh of her left leg. There is no right arm but rather a curious spiny wing-like projection instead. Although modern scholars accept the image as a sheela, Phillip Johnston, writing in 1918, suggested that the carving represented 'the contortions of a "tumbler", whose head, with protruded tongue, is twisted between his legs' (Johnston, 1918: 53).

At St John, Devizes, the corbel-table of six corbels (one bay) on the exterior north side of the chancel dates to the latter half of the twelfth century, contemporary with the building of the chancel itself. Originally this corbel-table probably extended

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Figure 9. 9 Corbel carved with a sheela-na-gig on the exterior of the north side of the nave at Studland.

Figure 9. 10 Sheela-na-gig within the Romanesque corbel-table on the north side of the chancel at Stoke-sub-Hamdon.

across the adjoining bay and east face of the north transept, now remodelled by the addition of a medieval north chapel.

The sequence is an interesting one for the connections it articulates between devouring, the mouth, and sexuality. The first corbel in the sequence, furthest east, is carved with a squatting mouth-puller figure with an extended tongue and enormously oversized head. Between this carving and the paired beast heads with grinning, tooth-filled mouths appears the corbel carved with the sheela-na-gig and the male exhibitionist figure (Fig. 9. 5b). The sheela appears in the squatting position similar to the image at Worth Matravers and similarly proportioned (the male figure has already been described). The fourth corbel from the east is a female exhibitionist and beast-head pair, the figures joined together by a length of rope from mouth to mouth; the next corbel is carved with a beast head with a wide open mouth and small hands that grip the lower jaw. The final image in the series is that of an embracing couple in the enormous open jaws of a beast head. While the themes this series highlights will be discussed in greater detail below it is possible that such an unusual set of images with few repetitive elements (which even when six or so corbels constitute a corbel-table is common – see for example Stoke-sub-Hamdon) is of some status, which would fit with the distinguished setting of the church within the outer bailey walls of the castle.

The final example is the sheela in the Romanesque corbel-table at Stoke-sub-Hamdon in Somerset (Ashdown, 1993) (Fig. 9. 10). Here the carving appears within a series of seven carved corbels beneath the eaves on the north side of the chancel, four of which are carved with geometric or architectural motifs, the other three with human or animal figures. These include the demi-figure of a human holding two cone-shaped items, the pointed ends of which rest against either side of the chin; a highly eroded and therefore unidentifiable quadruped, and the sheela herself, represented in characteristic fashion with oval oversized head, squatting posture and arms that reach downward behind her legs to rest the hands upon the buttocks. The image is similar to those already mentioned at Devizes and Worth Matravers.

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The Binstead Sheela-na-gig

Whilst the general conformity in treatment of the sheela motif in these Romanesque corbel tables is noteworthy, there is one particularly unusual example to be found in the area, at Binstead on the Isle of Wight. Carved on a keystone set within an arch that now forms an entrance gate into the churchyard from the south-east the figure kneels with her spindly legs apart upon the head of an animal, her arms coming down towards her genitals. The animal head resembles that of a bear and appears to be muzzled. The forepaws rest on each side of the snout (Fig. 9. 11).

Although some writers have suggested alternative interpretations of the figure, for example Pevsner and Lloyd's description of the pair as 'a beast's head and a small kneeling man' (1967: 733), the image is clearly an exhibiting female. Heavily weathered, the animal head is suggestive of Romanesque work, similar examples of which may be found at Studland. This would imply a similar date for the image above (in contrast Green [1969: 13] suggests that the carving is of later medieval date). Some authors have suggested the presence of a beard (e.g. Winter and Winter, 1987: 20). Such an interpretation is likely to derive from Percy Goddard Stone's late nineteenth century illustration which does indeed show the head of the figure as bearded (1891: Plate VI). This, however, is clearly 'an unjustifiable interpretation of the lower part of the very weathered face' (Hutchinson and Hutchinson, 1969: 239).

Writers since the nineteenth century have been unsure whether the present position of the image above the relocated north door represents its original one (e.g. Green, 1969: 13; Englefield, 1816: 95). Englefield's account is valuable because it documents the church before the major overhaul in 1844, and shows that before the archway was removed from the fabric of the building the image was above its apex. Figures, although rarely of such a size, can be found at the apex of arches in other Romanesque ecclesiastical buildings, for example in the nave at Wimborne Minster (Dorset). Englefield states, however, that it 'does not appear to have been originally in its present position' (1816: 95). John Albin's history of the Isle of Wight published in 1795 differs here. He describes the image as 'a very rude but ancient piece of

Figure 9. 11 The sheela-na-gig at Binstead. The figure sits upon a beast head reminiscent of those found on corbel-tables in the region.

Figure 9. 12 Sheela-na-gig with staff carved on a stone set into the west wall of the north transept at Romsey Abbey.

sculpture, over the keystone of the north door...probably one of those uncouth figures, which the Saxon and Norman architects were in a habit of placing on keystones and friezes' before relating the following:

> A report is related that this figure was removed some years ago, when the church was undergoing some repairs; but that it was restored to its ancient situation on its being productive of displeasure to the inhabitants (1795: 521-522)

It seems reasonable to conclude, as Hutchinson and Hutchinson have done, that 'there seems to be no independent evidence that it was originally not over the north door' (1969: 237).

Human figures seated upon animals occur in architectural contexts throughout medieval art and can be associated with derogatory connotations – riding backwards, for example, was a humiliating punishment for sexual offences (Melinkoff, 1973; see also Jones, 1991). The Binstead sheela, seated upon the head of an animal, may have articulated the idea that women and animals were closely connected and similarly irrational, driven by instinctual appetites rather than reason, as explored in chapter 7.

Sheela-na-gigs on Quoin Stones and other Inset Stones

Although this region has several sheela-na-gigs in Romanesque corbel-tables, by far the most common medium for the image, both in England and particularly in Ireland, is upon individually carved stones set into the fabric of a building. Four such examples exist in the area, at Romsey Abbey, Stanton St Quintin and Oaksey in Wiltshire, and at Fiddington in Somerset.

The Romsey sheela is carved upon a stone set into the exterior of the west face of the north transept and has a disproportionately oversized head, wide, squat body, short, spread legs and angular arms (Fig 9. 12). Her left hand reaches towards her

genitals and in her right hand she holds a crozier-like staff, an unusual feature which has attracted comment (see, for example, Murray, 1934: 98; Andersen, 1977: 128-129). McMahon and Roberts suggest that the figure is also holding a 'small unidentifiable object' in her left hand (2001: 164). Between the legs there is a curious curved object that has given rise to a tenuous interpretation of the figure as St Cecilia, standing above her mutilated breasts (Godwin, 1969: 222).

Stylistically the image suggests parallels with some of the twelfth-century figurative corbels on the Abbey, in particular, the shape of and the emphasis given to the head which indicates a likely twelfth-century date for this sculpture. The image forms part of the wall that was incorporated into the parish church in the fifteenth century (the palimpsest of windows beneath the image, as well as the two bays immediately east of the north porch, attest to the addition and later removal of an aisle, which, together with the pre-existing north aisle of the Abbey and its north transept formed the late medieval parish church of St Lawrence). According to Andersen the sheela would have been tucked away in the attic of the newly created aisle and thus out of view from those in the church (1977: 129).

The figures at Oaksey and Stanton St Quintin, like the Romsey sheela, are also carved upon stones that appear to be set at random into the fabric of their respective buildings. At Oaksey, the carving is set into the exterior of the north nave wall east of the north porch; while this is not its original position it 'is said to have been removed from the north side at the restoration' and so can be assumed to have been north facing, much like the carving at Binstead (Goddard, 1906: 156; Butt, 1906). The figure stands with her legs apart displaying an enormous, almost ankle-length vulva, the sides of which she grasps with long fingers threaded behind her thighs (Fig 9. 13). Pendulous breasts appear on each side of her chest as if hanging from her armpits (Murray and Passmore, 1923; Dobson, 1931:3). The carving at Stanton St Quintin is less easy to view, located high up on the north side of the tower. Absent from the literature until recently (Jordan, 2000: 48) the figure with overly large head stands upon a tiny pair of legs, her hands resting on each side of the genitals. Two long objects appear to be held in each hand and angle outwards from the body at

Figure 9. 13 The sheela-na-gig at Oaksey, carved on a stone set into the north wall on the east side of the porch.

Figure 9. 14 Sheela-na-gig carved on a quoinstone at Fiddington. In the top left corner of the image one of her animal ears is clearly visible.

about forty-five degrees. Small incised circles are used to indicate breasts and numerous holes have been drilled into the body of the figure – two on the stomach, and one beneath the vulva.

The Fiddington sheela is another unusual example and a chronological problem (Fig. 9. 14). The church of St Martin upon which the figure, carved in low relief on a red sandstone quoin-stone set into the south-east corner of the south nave aisle (the image facing south), was heavily restored in 1860. The Victorian intention was a restoration amounting to near-complete rebuild, leaving all but the fifteenth-century west tower untouched. Such a project, however, must have been abandoned for medieval and Jacobean material survives in various places – the chancel arch is fourteenth-century, and the roofs probably date to the sixteenth century. It has been suggested that the south walls of the nave and chancel contain an area of possible herringbone masonry which is often associated with late Saxon and early Norman building work (Aston, 1978-79: 113). However, positive identification of this part of the wall as authentic medieval herringbone is difficult; irregularly laid courses are common here and indeed, on close inspection the masonry in the wall appears to be more a random coincidence of angled stones than an intended pattern.

Close analysis of the figure reveals further problems with a Romanesque date. Omitted from the drawing published by Aston are the long oval ears that appear on either side of the figure's head, the left one raised higher than the right. As discussed in chapter 7, the characteristic way animal ears were carved on both human and animal figures in Romanesque carvings was as short pointed triangles, like cat's ears. In later medieval work architectural carvings favoured the more oval ass's ears familiar to fools, such as those found on the fourteenth-century corbel carvings in the nave at Amesbury. Although this is a broad trend it does provide a rough context in which to place the Sheela and is further weight behind a proposed later medieval date for the figure.

Here it is apposite to return to consider the medieval image of the fool first discussed in chapter 7. One manifestation of the changes experienced by the figure of the fool

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in the fourteenth century is the tendency to appear clothed. Prior to the mid-fourteenth century fool behaviour commonly involved stripping oneself naked, or wearing only the visual signs of office such as the two-eared hood or pointed Phrygian-style hat with attached bells (Billington, 1984: 4; Melinkoff, 1993: 89). In 1306, for example, payment is recorded to 'Bernard, the Fool, and 54 of his companions coming naked before the King, with dancing revelry' as part of the Whitsuntide celebrations in London that year. Billington notes that this group visited twice and 'their behaviour was clearly not thought indecent or abnormal' (1984: 5). Illustrations in manuscripts attest to the fool as consistently naked up to c1350 and thereafter clad in hood, tunic and hose, and by the end of the century the clothed and decorated fool was the most common (*ibid.* 5-7). Exaggerated body parts, in particular the sexual organs, have also been identified as appropriate to the representation of fools and trickster figures (Koepping, 1985: 212).

Thus the Fiddington image is consistent with representations of medieval fools up until the mid- to later fourteenth century, which might correspond with the date of the sculpture. In this scenario a date somewhere between the last third of the thirteenth century and the end of the fourteenth is suggested for the carving of the figure.

Later Medieval Sheela-na-gigs and Related Figures

Whilst definite late medieval contexts are common for the Irish sheelas, many of which occur on tower houses that date to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in England the perspective differs. I have already mentioned the difficulty of dating the carvings of sheelas that occur outside a reliable sculptural context such as a Romanesque corbel-table, and have illustrated this through exploring some of the problems encountered with attempts to fix a date upon the Fiddington image. In some cases, however, there are English examples within a reliable late medieval context, as is the case with the second sheela at Stoke-sub-Hamdon.

Few sites possess two sheela-na-gig carvings[1] and fewer still possess two carvings of different date. Stoke-sub-Hamdon may well be unique in that it has a Romanesque corbel sheela on the north side of the chancel and a fifteenth-century sheela carved as a gargoyle on the south side of the nave (Fig. 9. 15). Sheelas carved as gargoyles are uncommon. The figure is damaged, missing her right leg and right arm from the forearm to the shoulder and the mouth is open wide as if screaming, a stone now lodged inside it suggesting former use as a waterspout. Joined to the side of the church along one side of her body (viewer's right) she is naked and has long straight hair and pendulous breasts. Her left hand rests upon her body at the top of the genitals; her right hand holds the side of the head.

This carving exhibits a number of parallels with the female figure at Sopley in Hampshire (Fig. 9. 16). Carved on a corbel set into the north-east corner of the north transept the image faces the footpath that runs to the north door. The head, angled upright while the body reclines, has long straight hair that becomes wavy as it gets longer and flows down the sides of the body. The right arm is slightly bent, the hand resting on the right thigh just above the knee, while the left arm has broken off above the elbow. There is much damage to the lower body but what survives of the stonework suggests that the left leg was bent at the knee and angled away from the right one which was extended in a relatively straight line. This would have served to expose the genital area. Considering the nature of the figure on the opposite corner (the male exhibitionist figure described above) it is highly likely that this was a female exhibitionist carving. There is damage to the chest area as well but a rounded feature just above the broken left arm may suggest that the figure originally had breasts. The face is in good condition with well-defined eyes, nose, eyebrows and closed mouth. Pevsner and Lloyd date the figure to the mid-fourteenth-century at the earliest (1967: 509) although the image occurs in a thirteenth-century context (the transept itself).

What distinguishes the two carvings (Stoke-sub-Hamdon and Sopley) as different from typical sheela-na-gigs is the presence of long straight hair, which, as I explored

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[1] Another example is Tugford in Shropshire (Andersen, 1977: 144).

Figure 9. 15 Former gargoyle carved as a sheela-na-gig on the south side of the nave at Stoke-sub-Hamdon.

Figure 9. 16 The carving on the east side of the north transept at Sopley. It is possible that this figure was formerly an exhibitionist.

in chapter 8 is a characteristic feature of fish-sirens or mermaids. Both images suggest that in some instances a partial merging of the sheela-na-gig image with characteristics drawn from other monstrous female figures occurred in later medieval architectural sculpture.

Conclusion

It is particularly significant that, of all the images to be found throughout medieval architectural sculpture, only two – the head between figures and other mouth-puller type carvings (discussed in chapter 6) and the sheela-na-gig – appear to follow any discernible patterns of placement. Despite the variety of potential locations in which to site carvings it is rare to find either mouth-pullers or sheelas on anything other than corbels, inset stones or gargoyles and grotesques. This suggests that both images were considered more suited to the location afforded by these media and played a less significant part in the decorative repertoire of capitals, misericords, roof bosses and other carved structural elements. I have previously suggested (chapter 4) that medieval roofline imagery – corbel-tables, cornices, friezes, gargoyles and grotesques – closely resembles apotropaic architectural carvings of the Roman period, in particular those antefixa carved with the head of Medusa, geometric designs, sirens, harpies, and small figurative scenes. Romanesque corbels and later medieval gargoyles and associated carvings are very much a part of such a tradition and are likely to have been perceived to have possessed apotropaic power. Both images are related in other respects, particularly their subject matter, for both sheelas and mouth-pullers engage in drawing attention to or pulling apart an opening into or out of the body.

The location of sheela-na-gigs in this region is quite specific. Only two of the eleven examples – the sheela-fool at Fiddington and the sheela-siren at Stoke-sub-Hamdon – occur on the south side of the building. More typical sheelas appear on the exterior north side of their respective buildings: at Stanton St Quintin on the north side of

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the axial tower; at Oaksey on the north side of the nave; and at Romsey on the north transept (although set into the west face). The Romanesque corbels present an even more articulate pattern in that four examples are placed on the north side of the chancel (Devizes, Worth Matravers, Stoke-sub-Hamdon), while the one at Studland appears on the north side of the nave. All are likely to be in their original situation and as such provide compelling evidence for the association of the sheela-na-gig in this region with the north side of the church.

Whilst medieval lore associated the northern part of the church with darkness and malevolence due to the connections with the Old Testament, this area was also identified with women and female religious imagery (Gilchrist, 1994b: 128-149). The close association in this region between the north side of medieval churches and sheela-na-gigs might suggest that these carvings were viewed as effective apotropaia as well as articulating other associations connected with female iconography. The classical tradition of using monstrous female beings as architectural apotropaia such as sirens and the Gorgon's mask, which appears to have been revived or continued via Romanesque and later architectural sculpture, would have provided a suitable context for the sheela-na-gig and might go some way towards explaining the merging of siren and sheela characteristics that are to be found in the carving at Stoke-sub-Hamdon.

To summarize, the sheela-na-gigs in the south and west of England are closely associated with exterior locations, particularly corbels, inset stones and gargoyles, a pattern shared by images that belong to the mouth-puller pool of imagery. It is likely that both image types were perceived as effective apotropaic devices and located at architectural "weak" spots such as corners and the north side of buildings. The sheer apotropaic force of the imagery may have been exaggerated further in those carvings that connect sheelas and indeed, other exhibitionist figures, with an animal or beast. Whilst it is possible to read these images as a comment upon the animality of humans and the attendant dangers to one's soul, it is equally possible to find alternative meanings in which an animal presence would serve to enhance the

wildness of the figure and in so doing increase its power and thereby its effectiveness as an apotropaic image.

Conclusion

This thesis represents a move towards an understanding of medieval architectural imagery as part of a rich tradition of carving entirely suited to sites of spiritual activity.

Awareness of context is crucial in such an endeavour. To this end, chapters 1-3 tackled different context-related issues. In chapter 1 I demonstrated that the images found throughout medieval architectural sculpture from the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries and typically carved on roof bosses, corbels, as friezes, gargoyles or grotesques as well as upon interior woodwork such as misericords and bench ends have long been interpreted as purely didactic in their intent and copied from images in texts. Unlike wall paintings or figures of saints, however, these images are consistently difficult to see and appear to follow no particular programme, characteristics that rule out a didactic imperative as their main purpose. Moreover, the data suggests that we must disregard the idea of medieval carvers meticulously copying designs from other media to architectural contexts. There is considerable innovation and variation not only between sites but between individual carvings at a given site, as the Romanesque corbel-tables at Winchester Cathedral and Romsey Abbey reveal so clearly (see pages 98-103). On those few occasions when direct copying from another source can be ascertained, for example among the roof bosses in the chancel of St Barnabas, Queen Camel (Somerset) which are likely to have been inspired by a bestiary, the images stand out, not only in their inclusion of unusual and perhaps more erudite subjects such as the Peridixion Tree but in the representation of the figures which appears out of step with contemporary carvings elsewhere. Thus the siren at Queen Camel (Fig. 8. 11a) is represented with huge feathered wings as well as a tail, a manner of representation that, in this country, is rare in architectural work but not in bestiary manuscripts. This example also illustrates the danger of approaching medieval architectural images via texts, for only in a few cases can textual influence be determined. Architectural carving developed along different trajectories to manuscript illuminations and cannot be considered secondary to them.

In chapter 2 I suggested that we must consider the grotesque as encapsulating a set of ideas pertinent to our understanding of medieval architectural imagery. As a visual expression of the liminal the grotesque represents the unknown and unknowable – it is a visualization of things beyond human structures of understanding. Locating these ideas within medieval culture it is possible to find correspondences – monstrosity and obscenity as "dark" aspects of the sacred; the sacred as dismemberment of the familiar. By concentrating upon a range of carvings from ecclesiastical buildings in four counties (Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset and Wiltshire) I was able to substantiate the idea, first developed here, that medieval architectural sculpture was part of a tradition of carving necessarily embedded within the architecture of ecclesiastical buildings, both to identify that space as between human and divine and to symbolically protect it from the more malevolent aspects of this otherworldly energy.

Chapter 3 continued this exploration of context by investigating the social and ritual uses of medieval churches as well as their construction and patronage. My research suggested that the medieval attitude toward religious buildings held little distinction between sacred and profane, revealing the church standing at the centre of a variety of social events. The imagery typically found among architectural sculpture mirrors a similar fluidity of outlook, often intermingling secular and satirical images with monsters and distorted figures, as can be found among the miseriords at Winchester Cathedral or the roof bosses at Bishop's Cannings (Wiltshire).

In the following two sections (chapters 4-9) I turned to explore different features of architectural imagery, loosely grouped under heads (chapters 4-6) and figures (chapters 7-9). The most notable conclusion drawn from these explorations was that the imagery displays a range of potential meanings. Green Men, for example, might foreground the physicality of death, accent the promise of resurrection, or herald the otherness of the supernatural. This is entirely consistent with liminal status. My identification of broad subject groups – for example disgorging heads, sirens, exhibitionists – on the basis of shared formal characteristics, was repeatedly disrupted for many images belonged to two, or even three, groups at once. Thus sirens might appear as partially foliate or as disgorging foliage; exhibitionist figures

might be animal-human hybrids; mouth-pulling human heads often featured animal ears or horns, and what appeared at first glance as a Green Man often, with closer inspection, revealed itself to be a Green Animal. Lions, serpents and their derivatives (dragons, griffins etc) were particularly ambiguous and appeared in many different guises and contexts, as chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 have illustrated. In short, the images remain unclassifiable. For these reasons it was impossible to collect data in any regulated manner (I had begun with pro forma sheets but these quickly proved too rigid to be of any use); each site presented new carvings and new problems of classification. Increasing familiarity with the ambiguous and paradoxical world of the grotesque led me to expect such problems, however, and what I felt at first as a failure to arrange the imagery into any watertight groups became the most convincing argument for its permeability.

This has important ramifications. Medieval architectural sculpture is not a rigidly defined visual arena and many images are in a state of flux throughout the period. In some cases this may be due to the vast visual and folkloric inheritance of a certain motif – medieval representations of the mermaid, for example, incorporated elements from pagan goddesses such as Aphrodite and Venus, other supernatural characters such as the banshee, and figures of Christian sin such as the Great Whore of Babylon and Luxuria. Such a pool of imagery allowed numerous attributes to be associated with the figure: foliage, lions, dolphins, fish, comb and mirror among the most obvious. This diversity appears to thrive amongst architectural sculpture.

In a similar manner we must be wary of associating particular images with particular architectural locations. Whilst it is possible to note the general trends of different media in different periods in the study region, for example, the absence of Green Man images on Romanesque corbel-tables, or the bias toward composite leonine creatures displayed by late medieval gargoyles, no images (medium aside) appear to be strongly identified with a particular part of medieval religious buildings. Programmes of imagery – should they have existed in the first place – are very difficult to ascertain; not only have most medieval churches and cathedrals been partially rebuilt or restored, thus interrupting any intended design, but the wealth of

potential meanings we might attribute to these carvings precludes any coherent message. There is one image, however, that does suggest a more than arbitrary positioning and that is the mouth-puller and its variants, many of which are located at architectural junctures – the corners of the nave or tower, for example. This is a pattern found in Romanesque work, such as at Studland in Dorset, and to a much greater extent in later medieval gargoyles. As I have suggested in chapter 6, the concentration in Dorset of the head between figures, the figures pulling open the mouth of the central head, may well represent a localized fifteenth-century tradition of carving; certainly, the image must have been favourably viewed in the region to have been carved so frequently. Future work might explore such aspects in more detail, for example by focussing more closely upon similar localized image groups.

The identification of medieval architectural sculpture as part of the same continuum of representation that includes more recognizably "sacred" imagery is a new one for medieval studies. To consider the grotesque as an attempt to visualize the unrepresentable provides a fresh perspective; these images are not pagan oddities left high and dry by a Christian tide but rather head-on confrontations with the unknown that mediate between the human and non-human realms in the same way that saints and angels do – indeed, that the monsters and grotesque configurations are sometimes represented intermingling with such Christian figures testifies to this. These are images particularly suited to their ecclesiastical setting, efforts to represent the sacred in its fullest sense: malevolent, dark, comic, luminous, always completely other but never wholly unrecognizable. Architectural imagery not only called attention to the presence of this power, and thus to the space of the church or cathedral as powerful, but at the same time played an apotropaic role in protecting people from its potential danger. In warding off or trapping harmful spirits, apotropaic imagery was not necessarily intended to be viewed only by a human audience, a characteristic that helps to explain the typically obscure location of these carvings as well as their subject matter. Interwoven with these aspects, and as this thesis has supported, such liminal material is capable of substantiating a multiplicity of meanings. In failing to recognize this polysemy we do little justice to the depth, subtlety and richness of the medieval visual world.

Appendices

Catalogue of Architectural Sculpture from Selected Sites in Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset and Wiltshire

Dorset

Bere Regis St John the Baptist. A possible Saxon foundation, the church was largely rebuilt in the twelfth century and subsequently altered and enlarged throughout the later medieval period. Restored in the nineteenth century, the church now consists of a nave, chancel, west tower and north and south aisles. The nave arcades are in the transitional Norman style with pointed arches while the nave roof dates to 1486 and contains figures of the Apostles. The flint and stone chequered tower dates to c. 1500 (RCHM(E), 1970a: 12; Newman and Pevsner, 1972: 89-91; DHCT, 1988: 10).

> *Sculpture*
> I. Capitals, south arcade, c.1160.

I. Four broad columns with narrow capital bands. From west to east these are carved as follows:

1) Scallop decoration.

2) Two heads protrude from the SE (a) and NE (b) corners of the capital;

a) Male head with arms and hands that pull open the mouth.

b) Head with moustache, beard, Norman haircut and left hand on the forehead. Stylized sprigs of foliage appear on either side.

3) Four heads, one on each corner;

a) (NW) Horse head with the full figure of a small beast in profile biting its right ear. The latter is decorated with circles where the legs join the body.

b) (SW) Crowned head with a moustache.

c) (NE) Grimacing ape head.

d) (SE) Similar image to 2b – a head with a moustache and beard, and a left hand on the forehead. Foliage runs beneath the head.

4) This capital has shields on the corners and foliage in between.

The Royal Commission make the following observations:

> Equally extrovert [to the corbels at Studland] are the carvings on the capitals of the S. Arcade at Bere Regis of c.1160 which together comprise the only Romanesque architectural scheme in S. E. Dorset showing an attempt at decorative elaboration of a figurative as opposed to a formal kind. Of particular interest is the occurrence therein of irrelevant details which are explicable only as debased forms of Anglo-Scandinavian spiral joints of the kind seen on a number of pre-Conquest carvings in England (1970a: xlvi).

Similar spiral leg joints are carved on a boar on the tympanum at St Nicholas, Ipswich (Zarnecki *et al*, 1984: 164). Carvings 2a, 3a, 3b and 3d are illustrated in the Royal Commission volume (1970a: Plate 7).

Bradford Abbas St Mary the Virgin. Although the chancel dates to the twelfth century the church took most of its present form during the mid-fifteenth century and was complete by the 1480s. This work consisted of rebuilding and lengthening the nave, building the south chapel, south porch and the two bays of the north aisle. Shortly afterwards the north aisle was extended westwards and the west tower built. Towards the end of the fifteenth century the south vestry was added and the arch between it and the chancel inserted. Extensive restoration took place in the mid-late nineteenth century: in 1858 the wall above the rood screen was removed and the

present chancel arch inserted; in 1890 the walls were completely stripped of plaster. Little medieval fabric remains *in situ* (RCHME, 1952: 31-34; Newman and Pevsner, 1972: 106-107).

Sculpture

I. Bench ends, nave (reset in northeast corner), late 15th/early16th century.

I. Like so much else in the church the two bench-ends are no longer in their original medieval position but have been collected together to form part of a parson's pew just in front of the chancel screen. The images carved on the sides are;

1) A seated griffin in profile, one wing extended and with detailed carving to the upper part of the body (feathers) (Fig. 5. 6).

2) A figure of a saint, probably St Paul, holding a sword and a book.

Other decorative motifs here include 'ogee tops, poppy heads and panels carved with elaborate vine and ivy foliage, elbow rests and back posts carved with beasts and an owl' (RCHME, 1952: 33-34). The beasts are seated apes (Fig. 7. 4).

Broadwey St Nicholas. Neo-Norman church of 1874 with a (reset) twelfth-century south door (Newman and Pevsner, 1972: 115).

Sculpture

I. Capitals, exterior of south door, 12th century.

I. Both capitals are carved in a pale stone:

1) West capital; A variety of amphisbaena – a scaled and winged creature with a long neck who clutches the roll-mould at the base of the capital with its forelimbs and bites it with its mouth. Its body terminates in two scrolling serpent-tails, each with a head, each head with its mouth open (Fig. 5. 11).

2) East capital; a mixture of interlace, a bearded head on the angle, and an inverted lion with its tail curved tightly between its legs (Fig. 5. 8).

The style of representation of the amphisbaena, in particular its tail, is similar to the tail of the hybrid horse/serpent at Little Langford (I1) and some of the dragons at Romsey (I7b, I20a). This might suggest a date somewhere in first half of the 12th century for the carvings here.

Cerne Abbas St Mary. Late medieval church built from flint and stone and consisting of a west tower, nave, nave aisles, south porch and chancel (RCHME, 1952: 74).

Sculpture
I.   Grotesques, west end of nave aisles, 15th century.

II.   Grotesques, tower faces, 15th century.

III.   Head, south aisle, probably 15th century.

I. The west front (also the main entrance through the door in the tower) faces the road laid out around 1400 and features three carvings on each end of the north and south aisles. A crenellated parapet runs just above them.

North aisle, north to south:

1) Central beast head with forelimbs whose mouth is being pulled open by two squatting and grimacing human figures, one on each side. These figures exhibit some distorted characteristics – the one on the south side has a pronounced chest like many of the "hunky punk" animal carvings in Somerset – and it is possible that they were intended to be slightly animal like.

2) Grimacing human head with small arms from whose mouth hangs a smaller human figure. The large head has deep lines in the face and appears to have animal ears and hair. The smaller figure also has its mouth open, and is held by one of the head's arms.

3) Weathered leonine beast head with wings.

Below these three figures is a window complete with a hood mould that terminates in label stops carved with male and female heads.

South aisle, north to south:

4) Grimacing human figure wielding a club.

5) Squatting and hooded human figure holding an axe with both hands.

6) Variant on the central beast head with two figures pulling open the mouth. Here, rather than pull open the mouth the two attendant figures on each side of the head pull a third human figure out of the mouth of the head, each one holding an arm. The emerging figure grips the forelimbs of the beast head. The two figures on each side are clothed and grimace, their bodies in squatting positions similar to those on carving no. 1 in this series.

This series of carvings are all easily visible and face the road that is contemporary with their creation. This suggests that these were intended to be seen by a human audience. The absence of similar carvings on other parts of the church at a similar height (between ten and fifteen feet high) supports this.

II. About two thirds of the way up the tower runs a band of modern quatrefoils. Immediately above this, centrally positioned on each face, is a carving (a). These carvings each support the base of a pinnacle that reaches up to the base of the window directly above. On the string-course below the crenellated parapet at the top of the tower, immediately above the tip of the window, there is another image (b).

1) South face a) squatting lion; b) human demi-figure with arms that rest on either side of the belly.

2) East face a) enormous shaggy head with four claw-ended legs; b) female figure with long dressed hair and holding a shield.

3) North face a) human headed equine beast with feathered wings and oversize head with deep set eyes and fleshy face; b) leonine looking head.

4) West face a) animal-eared human figure playing the pipes; upon his left shoulder there is another much smaller piper with similar features; b) human figure holding a shield.

These carvings, as well as those on the west faces of the aisles, share many stylistic and thematic similarities with the carvings on the south aisle at Stinsford, also in Dorset. The emphasis upon mouth-pulling figures, figures hanging or emerging from mouths, the pair of pipers, and the rounded, fleshy style of carving all point strongly to the Cerne and Stinsford images being carved by the same team of masons or sculptors.

III. On the south aisle, between a late medieval window and the west wall of the south porch, is a human head with enormous yawning mouth, curly hair and small hollow eyes set into the wall. This is 'said to have been the orifice of a chimney' (Dicker, 1908: 7) but the assertion is tenuous.

Chetnole St Peter. The medieval parts of the church of St Peter consist of a nave built or rebuilt late in the thirteenth century and a west tower added early in the fifteenth century (although this may have been rebuilt in 1580). The south porch is post-medieval (sixteenth or seventeenth century). Between 1860 and 1866 extensive restoration took place, the chancel being rebuilt and the north aisle and arcade added. Further restoration work occurred in 1897 (Almack, 1918: 120; RCHME, 1952: 91-93; Newman and Pevsner, 1972: 149).

Sculpture

I. Gargoyles, west tower, 15th century.

I. Four large gargoyles on each corner of the tower.
1) (NW) Mouth-puller with figures. Two full human figures wearing long-sleeved, knee-length tunics stand on either side of a large head of a beast. Each figure uses one arm (the one furthest from the central head) to pull open its mouth, through which a lead pipe extends.
2) (SW) Hybrid Beast. The figure is composed from the body of a quadruped with leonine forelimbs that appear to be angled slightly backwards, a head with a large

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open mouth, animal ears, and in between them, tufts of thick curly hair. Membranous wings sprout from just behind the head which is itself set back upon the body in the hunky-punk tradition.

3) (SE) Human figure with large belly, thick hair, and hands on either side of open mouth. The figure also wears a hat.

4) (NE) Front part of a hybrid beast with back-to-front forelimbs (they resemble the rear legs of an animal) and large flat wings. There is a wide open mouth through which a lead pipe protrudes. Animal ears and tufts of hair appear upon the top of the head.

Christchurch Christchurch Priory. A substantial building has existed here since the later seventh century when a Minster church was established. In the late eleventh century these buildings were pulled down and a much larger church erected. By 1150 a cruciform structure with an apsidal east end and a central tower topped by a spire had been completed. In this year the existing canons were replaced by a community of Augustinian Canons who divided the building, turning the nave into a parish church whilst retaining the choir for their own services. They added the range of buildings characteristic of monastic establishments – cloister, refectory, dormitory, kitchen, library and so on – all of which were destroyed at the Reformation. Today the building consists of a west tower, a nave (with north and south aisles) of seven bays, north and south transepts, choir, north and south choir aisles, retrochoir and lady chapel (Peers, 1912; Stannard, 1985).

Sculpture

I.   Capitals, nave arcades, mid-12th century.

II.   Misericords, choir, mainly 16th century (but with two early 13th and two mid-14th century examples).

I. The capitals here have suffered a great deal from the effects of salt water, which, having seeped into the stone on its cross-channel journey has slowly leached out and

in the process caused the stone to deteriorate. This has, sadly, made many of the carvings impossible to decipher. The figurative ones that are visible, however, include the following:

1) North side of the nave, 3rd column from the west, east face: a figure in profile of an extensively damaged winged beast, probably a Griffin.

2) South side of the nave, 6th column from the west, north face: feline beast head disgorging foliage (?).

3) South side of the nave, 4th column from the west, west face: the heads of two confronted beasts.

The blind arcading on the south side of the south nave aisle has weathered better, and here can be found rich and varied geometric and foliate designs carved into the capitals. Figurative images among them include

4) A human figure in a belted tunic astride the back of a lion. The figure pulls the head of the beast back with his hands.

5) A lion with its tail curved up between its rear legs.

II. A full list of the misericords and other carved stallwork can be found in Remnant, 1969: 54-56 and Roberts *et al*, 2000.

Hilton All Saints (DORS07). Fifteenth-century church composed of a west tower, nave, nave aisles and chancel. It has been suggested that the north nave aisle windows with panel tracery and their buttresses with gargoyles are from nearby Milton Abbey and, although placed here after the Dissolution in the sixteenth century, are of fifteenth century date (Lee, 1908; RCHM(E), 1970b: 110-112; Newman and Pevsner, 1972: 228; DHCT, 1988: 27).

Sculpture

I. Gargoyles and grotesques, north nave aisle, 15th century.

I. Seven images, from east to west;

1) A human head embedded in the string-course and looking out from the NE corner.

2) Gargoyle with a lion-like head, open mouth and two paws beneath the chin.

3) Human figure playing the bagpipes. The body has an oversized head and bends around the moulding of the string-course.

4) Gargoyle with a lion-like head, open mouth, two small forelegs, thick curly hair, and bat wings at the shoulders.

5) Grimacing human head with animal ears and small limbs. The lower part of the carving is missing.

6) Human head with wide open mouth (gargoyle), barrel under the left arm and a beast on the right shoulder.

7) Human head with extended tongue.

Leigh St Andrew. Like nearby Chetnole this church was also a former chapel of Yetminster. The chancel, nave, west tower and south porch were all built in the second half of the fifteenth century but much of the fabric was heavily restored in the mid-nineteenth century. Indeed, the chancel was largely rebuilt, and the north aisle with its huge gargoyles was itself added around 1840 (Almack, 1918: 124; RCHME, 1952: 130-131; Newman and Pevsner, 1972: 251).

Sculpture

I. Gargoyles, tower, 15th century.

I. Four carvings on each corner of the tower, below the crenellations.

1) (NW) Bird-like creature with feathered chest and bat wings.

2) (SW) Grimacing human demi-figure clothed in voluminous robes and with hands held together beneath the chin.

3) (SE) Hybrid creature with the body of a bird, leonine head, membranous wings, grimacing expression, and large ears.

4) (NE) Hybrid figure with distinct avian characteristics.

Image number 2 has been wrongly identified by Peter Knight and Mike Power as a Sheela-na-gig. They write that '[a]t the church of St Andrew are some features of interest...One carving is a Sheela-na-gig, one of only a handful known in Dorset...Others can be found at Studland and Sopley, north of Christchurch' (Knight and Power, 2000: 50). The mistake may have resulted from identifying the shape made by the hands of the figure as female genitals.

Longburton St James. Late medieval church built from irregular courses of sandstone blocks and consisting of a west tower with buttresses on each angle, crenellated parapet and pronounced string course below with a gargoyle at each corner, nave with south porch, north aisle, and a chancel with north chapel. The tower is about 35 feet high (RCHME, 1952: 61).

Sculpture
I.   Gargoyles, each corner of the tower, 15th century.

I. Each gargoyle looks out from the corner.
1) (SE) Beast or human head between two human figures, each of whom uses one arm to pull the corners of the central beast's mouth open (Fig. 6. 14f).
2) (SW) Beast with large ears, and finely carved membranous wings folded at the sides of the body.
3) (NW) Beast with large head, shaggy hair, membranous wings and squatting body. The legs end in humanoid feet edged with several toes or clumps of hair.
4) (NE) Squatting human figure with oversized head.

Mappowder St Peter and St Paul. For the most part the fabric here dates to the fifteenth century (this includes the nave, west tower, south porch and south aisle).

The chancel was rebuilt in 1868 (RCHM(E), 1970b, 145-147; Newman and Pevsner, 1972: 269; Morshead, 1975: 62).

Sculpture

I.   Corbel, interior of south arcade, north side of east respond, 15th century.

II.   Gargoyles and grotesques, exterior of chancel, nave, tower and south aisle, 15th century.

I. Bracket carved with a human head from whose nose sprouts large, broad-leaved foliage. The tip of the nose is missing, and the mouth of the head is slightly open. The position of the carving might suggest that it once formed part of the Rood Loft structure; certainly it looks capable of supporting a fairly sizeable wooden beam. The presence of the arch immediately above mitigates against the bracket supporting a statue (illustrated in RCHM(E), 1970b: Plate 16; see also Fig. 5. 30).

II.

A. North side of the chancel

1) Beast with spiny ridge along the centre of its back and its tail between the legs.

B. North side of nave, east to west

1)   Beast head, upon which sits another, smaller beast.

2)   Lion with a voluminous mane and fairly human face. The tail wraps itself over the rear of the body.

3)   Lion in profile, head turned over its right shoulder. There is a thick curly mane and a tightly curved tail that sprouts up through its rear legs to rest upon the back. A drainpipe protrudes through the widely opened mouth. Almost directly below is a reset corbel carved with the head of a bearded male (Fig. 7. 3).

C. South aisle, west to east

1) On top of the SW corner buttress, two grimacing figures on either side of a large beast head, each figure pulling apart the beast's mouth. A short piece of lead pipe protrudes from the central beast head's mouth, and small talon-like forelimbs appear from its lower jaw. There is some sort of crest on the head – this is probably thick spiky hair.

2) Above SE buttress, hybrid creature with bat wings and talon ended limbs.

D. South side of chancel

1) Leonine beast.

E. Tower, carvings on each corner

1) (NE) human figure bent at the waist, carrying a pot or barrel on one shoulder.
2) (NW) musician; demi-figure of a human playing a pipe.
3) (SW) head of a ferocious looking beast with lots of teeth and thick curly hair. A drain issues from the mouth.
4) (SE) winged hybrid (one wing missing), with two forelimbs.

The Royal Commission describe the figures on the tower as 'two musicians and two monsters' (1970b: 146).

Milton Abbas Abbey Church of St Mary, St Samson and St Branwalader. Founded in 935 by King Athelstan and rebuilt in the Norman period, on the second of September 1309 the wooden steeple was struck by lightning and the church almost entirely destroyed by fire. The part of the abbey that stands today (chancel, chancel aisles, crossing tower and north and south transepts) represents the fourteenth-century rebuilding (apart from the north transept which dates to the fifteenth century). The monastic buildings lay to the north of the abbey church; all but the abbot's hall were destroyed in the late eighteenth century by the Earl of Dorchester in order to construct a new mansion. Between 1771 and 1790 the market town that

had grown up beside the abbey was cleared away in order to create a suitably picturesque setting for the house. This was complete with landscaped "ruins" made out of materials gained from the destruction of the town and conventual buildings (Pentin, 1905: 194-198). In 1954 the aristocratic house became a boys school (Calthrop, 1908a; Glynne, 1924: 38-40; RCHM(E), 1970b: 145-147; Newman and Pevsner, 1972: 285-293).

Sculpture

I.   Roof bosses, chancel and chancel aisles, 14th century.

I. The seven bays of the quadripartite vaulted chancel and chancel aisles bear one central boss each. The vaults and bosses are constructed from Ham stone.

A. North chancel aisle, west to east

1) Crowned demi-figure holding aloft sprigs of foliage.

2) Angel thrusting a spear into the mouth of a dragon.

3) Bishop holding a staff and raising his right hand in blessing.

4) Green Man. The head is crowned, and a thick beard grows from the chin. Two leaves sprout from each side of the mouth, their foliage filling up the capital.

5) Foliage.

6) Two sinuous winged serpent type dragons in foliage. Their bodies dissolve into the stems.

7) Foliage.

B. Chancel, west to east

1) Foliage.

2) Two slender intertwined dragons in foliage (Fig. 5. 17).

3) Foliage.

4) Figure of a bishop.

5) Bearded head among foliage.

6) Foliage.

7) Foliage.

C. South chancel aisle, west to east

1) Angel with outstretched wings.

2) Bird amongst foliage.

3) Contorted body of a lion, the head twisted around to look over its back.

4) Figure on the back of a lion pulling the mouth of the creature open (Fig. 7. 1b).

5) to 7) Foliate bosses.

Sherborne Abbey Church of St Mary. In 705 Sherborne was made the see of the Bishop of Wessex. Until 1075, when the administrative centre was moved to Old Sarum, the church remained a cathedral. Since 998 it was also the church of a monastic establishment (the cloister was on the north side of the nave and now forms part of a boy's school) and remained so until 1539. Despite such ancient origins most of the visible fabric dates to the mid-fifteenth century when the church was rebuilt after a disastrous fire that occurred during a riot in 1437. Parts of the older, early twelfth-century building may be still be seen, however, in the transepts, crossing, north transeptal chapel, north chancel aisle and parts of the nave. Tenth-century fabric is also still visible in the external wall at the west end of the nave. Intensive restoration took place in the nineteenth century. In 1849 the nave aisles and transepts were restored and the south porch built; 1865-8 saw the east end of the building renovated while the tower was restored in 1884-5. Today the church consists of a nave and choir with side aisles, a crossing tower with north and south transepts, a retrochoir and Lady Chapel, and a south porch (Calthrop, 1908b; Glynne, 1924: 54; RCHME, 1952: 200-209; Newman and Pevsner, 1972: 368-374; Morshead, 1975: 63; DHCT, 1988: 42).

Sculpture

I.   Gargoyles and grotesques, exterior of north and south sides of nave aisles and south chancel aisle, 15th century.

II.   Misericords, choir, 15th century.

III. Roof bosses, nave, 15th century.

I.

A. Exterior of south side of church, west to east

1) Bearded head with open mouth, set upon two legs (a gryllus).

2) Lion with open mouth, flowing mane, and forelimbs resting upon the moulding.

3) Human-headed, bat-winged and talon-footed beast. The forehead is heavily ridged and there are animal ears instead of human ones. The mouth is open and reveals teeth.

4) On the southwest corner of the south transept; lion-headed, bat-winged beast with small forelimbs and open mouth.

5) Chancel aisle; fierce-looking winged lion. The wings are feathered rather than membranous, and the mouth is open.

6) Two leonine figures on either side of a beast's head, pulling open the mouth by its corners (Fig. 6. 14d).

7) Winged lion.

B. North side of nave aisle, east to west

1) Ram's head and forepaws.

2) Hybrid beast.

3) Human figure, one hand holding open the mouth.

4) and 5) Hybrid beasts.

Numerous carvings of lions with their tails between their legs appear along the top of the north and south sides of the nave (see, for example, Fig. 7. 2). Winged lions occur on the north side of the chancel.

II. A full description of the misericords can be found in Remnant 1969: 38-39. Illustrations appear in Remnant, 1969: pls. 1d, 20a, 20b, 20c, and Harding 1998a: 58-59.

III. The fan vaults throughout the building are decorated with numerous bosses, most carved into foliage. Some bosses in the nave bear figurative work and these include the following:

1) Red dragon. The creature has two wings, four legs, and partially hides behind its forepaws. The tip of its tail rests in its mouth.

2) Angel trampling a wyvern underfoot, the tail of which curls up into a knot. As well as two feathered wings, the body of the angel is entirely covered in feathers.

3) Two dogs in foliage, the larger of the two with a bone in its jaws.

4) Lion head with tongue extended (Fig. 6. 9).

5) Two wyverns, nose to tail.

6) Two ape-like beasts, nose to tail.

7) Owl mobbed by birds.

8) Pelican in her piety.

9) Six-headed dragon, the long necks sprouting from each end of the body.

10) Mermaid with wavy hair to the shoulders. In her hands she holds up a mirror and comb.

11) Bird amongst foliage.

12) Four lion heads with their tongues extended.

13) Two figures. One pulls his tunic up and bends over, the other aims his loaded crossbow at the former's exposed rear end.

14) Green Man. Two berry-laden stems of foliage emerge from each side of the mouth.

Stinsford St Michael. The church consists of a short nave with north and south aisles, a west tower and a chancel. The chancel and north arcades of the nave date to the early thirteenth century; the west tower was added in the early fourteenth century. At a similar time the west wall of the nave was rebuilt. The south aisle, however, with its distinctive crenellated parapet, is fifteenth century. Various post-medieval building and restoration work has taken place on the north side of the church (Glynne, 1924: 58-59; RCHM(E), 1970b: 252-253; Newman and Pevsner, 1972: 398).

Sculpture

I.   Gargoyles and grotesques, exterior of south nave aisle, 15th century.

I. West to east:

1) (SW corner of aisle) Head displaying both human and animal features, foliage sprouting from the corners of the wide open mouth to spread in profusion over the sides of the head (Fig. 5. 24).

2) Head, almost entirely taken over by its enormous yawning mouth. Eyes and round ears are, however, visible. The carving appears to be more weathered than the others, which, as well as being cut into the string course suggests that it may not be original to this series.

3) Figure emerging from the mouth of a larger human figure, the latter with a disproportionately oversized head and beast-like feet. The disgorged figure is held by the arms.

4) Plain human face with bulging eyes, cut into the string course in a similar manner to number 2.

5) Two figures, one of which is a large head with open mouth and short stocky arms; the other (to the west) is a full figure whose legs bend beneath the chin of the head to be gripped by the demi-figure's left hand. The upright figure pulls open the nearest corner of the large head's mouth.

6) Beast head with wide open mouth and tufts of hair between small pointed ears.

7) (SE corner of aisle) Human head with a figure on either side, each pulling one side of the central head's mouth open (Fig. 6. 14a).

8) (E face of S aisle) Two musicians; the larger of the two plays bagpipes, the smaller one appears above the left shoulder of the bagpiper and plays a pipe.

9) A grinning tumbler whose head appears between the two upturned legs. The left hand is visible holding the underside of the left thigh. It may be the case that this was once an exhibitionist figure as the buttocks and genital area have been damaged (Fig. 9. 3a).

Carvings number 1, 3 and 5 are all illustrated in the appropriate Royal Commission volume on Dorset (RCHM(E), 1970b: Plate 18) .

Studland St Nicholas. Built between 1125 and 1140, Studland has been described as 'one of the best examples of parish church architecture in Norman England' (Lundgren and Thurlby, 1999: 13). Studland preserves its original three-cell plan of chancel, central tower, and nave; the south porch is nineteenth century (Glynne, 1924: 60-61; Lundgren and Thurlby, 1999).

Sculpture

I. Corbels, exterior of north and south sides of the nave, 12th century (c.1125-1140).

I.

A. North side of nave, east to west:

1) Plain beast head with pointed ears. In Johnston's drawing (1918: 52, Fig. 10) it appears to be a pig.

2) Plain, expressionless human head.

3) Beast head with pointed ears and thin nose. Johnston pictures it chomping on a stick; for Lundgren and Thurlby the protruding ends of the 'stick' are actually short tusks (Johnston, 1918: 52, Fig. 12; Lundgren and Thurlby, 1999: 6).

4) Fairly plain human head whose hair hangs close to the face ('a helmet-like hair style' according to Lundgren and Thurlby, 1999: 6).

5) A horizontal cylinder shape with a cross design on each end.

6) A pair of beast heads with pointed ears, near-cylindrical, downward-pointing snouts, long, thin protruding tongues and teeth in a circle pattern around the tongues.

7) Geometric designs.

8) Simply carved human head, very plain in appearance.

9) Beast head; plain face, massive mouth with wide protruding tongue.

10) Geometric design.

11) Head with extended tongue.

12) Two heads side by side, one animal (pig?) and one human. Both have their mouths open.

13) Figure with an animal head and rounded ears; the exact features of the body are difficult to discern with any clarity.

14) Crouching figure with huge head tilted to one side and enormous bulging genitals between her legs. Her left arm passes beneath her left thigh and a well-defined hand rests just to the left of the vulva. There is no right arm but rather a curious wing-like projection. Although it is accepted today as a Sheela-na-gig (McMahon and Roberts, 2000: 165-166) an earlier interpretation concluded that the figure represents 'the contortions of a "tumbler," whose head, with protruded tongue, is twisted between his legs' (Johnston, 1918: 53) (Fig. 9. 9).

15) Squatting figure with staring head, spread legs and arms that appear to rest upon the knees. The posture is suggestive of an exhibitionist figure, although the space between the legs has either been left unfinished or tampered with at some point in its history.

16) Human head with large round eyes, a tapering face and triangular mouth. The hands of the figure cup the chin.

17) A tumbler/acrobat. The figure is bent so far backwards that the head appears upside-down between the knees. Her genitals are clearly visible (Fig. 9. 3b).

18) Head of a boar with a large stick in its mouth.

19) Four-pointed star design.

20) Paired figure corbel. The easternmost image is of a squatting man with thin tapering head; to his left is the head of a horse with bridle, or the head of a muzzled bear.

21) Geometric design; a circle enclosing a diamond-shape. The pattern appears on each face of the corbel.

22) Muzzled bear head.

23) Two heads. The easternmost one is a fairly plain beast head with long downward pointing snout and pointed ears. The head on the west side of the corbel is a human head angled at 45 degrees to its partner (so that its gaze is met if the

church is approached from an angle) with hands that pull at the sides of the mouth. A long tongue protrudes; the edges of the mouth are lined with teeth (Fig. 6. 10).

B. South side of the nave, west to east:

1) Similar carving to A23; a pair of heads, the one on the corner is a human head angled at 45 degrees. It too displays an open mouth lined with teeth, tiny hands on either side, and a long drooping tongue. The other head is that of a beast with pointed ears, open mouth and extended tongue.

2) A muzzled beast head (possibly a bear).

3) A squatting male figure with a scrotum of generous proportions. His hands rest at the base of his (now missing) penis, itself 'formerly of heroic diameter' (Lundgren and Thurlby, 1999: 6). He has a moustache and his head is tilted backwards (Fig. 9. 5a).

4) Beast head characteristic of this series (long, almost cylindrical- shaped snout with flat end, pointed ears and almond eyes) with a small, seated human body that holds a cylindrical object in its lap.

5) Ape-like head with round bulging eyes, open mouth with wide lolling tongue, and a type of cap or thick hair.

6) Geometric design – a circle enclosing a diamond shape.

7) Two cylinder-shaped beast heads. Johnston calls these a pair of dragon's heads (1918: 54).

8) Horse head biting upon a stick.

9) Animal head with large pointed ears like horns. The tongue protrudes through a slit-like mouth lined with teeth. A pair of small hands rest upon the sides of the face.

10) A ram's head carved in the style of many of the beast heads in this sequence, i.e. with a long cylindrical snout and flat mouth. Two spiralling horns appear at the sides of the head.

11) A pair of plain human heads.

12) Viewed straight on, a geometric design common to this sequence (a circle enclosing a diamond). Viewed from beneath, two grimacing human heads with bared teeth.

13) Destroyed.

14) Plainly carved head of a pig.

15) Geometric design.

16) Plainly carved human head.

17) A copulating couple. The figure furthest east appears to have the head of an animal, and looks over the shoulder.

18) Pair of human heads looking out in different directions. Both have long thin moustaches, round eyes and an open mouth. The head furthest east pulls at the sides of his mouth with small hands.

19) Destroyed.

20) Human head.

21) Beast head with large open mouth, extended tongue and long pointed ears.

22) Beast head.

23) Destroyed.

24) Geometric design.

25) Geometric design.

Descriptions of the corbel-table can be found in the articles by Johnston (1918: 33-68) and Lundgren and Thurlby (1999: 1-16). Many of the carvings on the north side of the nave were sketched by Johnston and are used to illustrate his article (1918: 1-4, 6-15). Lundgren and Thurlby illustrate B18, B17, B3, B1, A14, A21 in figures 8-13 (1999: 7). The Royal Commission also publish photographs of carvings B3, B9, B17, B18 (RCHM(E), 1970a: Plate 7).

Sydling St Nicholas St Nicholas. Standing to the south west of the village the church consists of a west tower, nave, north porch, south aisle and chancel. The tower is the oldest part of the building, dating to the mid-fifteenth century. The nave

and north porch were built soon after, while around 1500 the south arcade and south aisle were added. The chancel is a post-medieval rebuild (mid-eighteenth century) (RCHME, 1952: 230-233).

Sculpture

I.   Gargoyles and grotesques, exterior of north porch, north and south sides of the nave, tower, 15th century.

I.

A. Four carvings project from the tower (c1430), one from each corner:

1) (NW) Hybrid beast with bat-like wings, shaggy haired body, forepaws with claws and wide open mouth.

2) Lion with profuse mane.

3) Squatting human figure pulling open his mouth with his hands.

4) Beast head flanked by two lion/demon figures, each of which pulls one side of the central beast's mouth open.

B. North porch and north side of nave (c1480):

1) (NE corner of porch) Beast with well-defined bat wings.

2) (NW corner of porch) Beast with large ears and shaggy fur-covered body. Its heavy paws appear to pull the sides of the already gaping mouth.

3) (At juncture of tower) Beast head with puffy cheeks, upright ears and thick hair. A drainpipe comes out of the open mouth.

C. South side of the south aisle, west to east (c1500)

1) (SE corner, on top of the buttress) Prowling beast with open mouth, large ears, ridged head and bulging eyes.

2) Similar creature to C1.

3) Seated human figure with bird's feet, animal ears and wide open mouth. The figure rests his head in his hands (Fig. 7. 9).

4) Ferocious-looking hybrid with angular ears, large oval eyes, open mouth, bat wings and feathered forelegs.

Upwey St Lawrence (DORS16). The chancel, vestry, south aisle and south arcade of this church are modern; the north arcade, north aisle and tower date to the fifteenth century (Glynne, 1924: 66-67; Newman and Pevsner, 1972: 433-434).

Sculpture

    I.   Capitals, responds at each end of north arcade and east end of south arcade, 15th century.

    II.   Gargoyles and grotesques, exterior of north aisle, 15th century.

I. Arcade of four bays with foliate capital bands and moulded columns.

1) (W respond) Green Man; a simple head disgorging sinuous oak foliage from each corner of the mouth.

2) (E respond) Foliate head; a small head amongst twisting berry-laden foliage. The stems appear to sprout from behind the head.

3) (E respond, south arcade) Similar to the above.

II. Three carvings, east to west:

1) Figure upon the back of a lion's head. The mouth of the lion is open and lined with rounded teeth. The figure sits astride the neck of the animal and holds each side of the mouth.

2) Head and foreparts of a crested, winged and scaled creature, possibly a dragon.

3) (NW corner) Crouching lion in profile. The mouth is open and the mane is carved in striated lines (compare with Mappowder gargoyles).

Winterbourne Whitechurch St Mary. A flint and rubble church with ashlar dressings consisting of an aisled nave, chancel, central tower and south chapel. The chancel dates to the early thirteenth century. Traces of former north and south

transepts suggest a cruciform structure once existed. The crossing was rebuilt in the fourteenth century and the present central tower dates to the fifteenth century. The south chapel is on the site of the former south transept and dates to the mid-fifteenth century. In 1844 the nave was completely rebuilt and the north and south aisles added. The date of the arches beneath the tower has proved to be an art historical problem. In 1910 Pentin suggested that they were late Norman; sixty years later the Royal Commission suggested that they are fourteenth century with sixteenth-century capitals (Pentin, 1910: xxxviii-xxxix; RCHM(E), 1970b: 309-311; Newman and Pevsner, 1972: 488-489).

Sculpture

I. Capitals, interior of central tower, 13th and 16th century (?)

I. The capitals, or more properly responds (none of the columns are freestanding), appear beneath the chancel arch and an arch to the south side of the chancel that opens out into a south chapel/aisle. The carvings belonging to each arch are stylistically very different. The four carvings beneath the chancel arch each depict the head of a man or mask, the edges of the face dissolving into broad-leaved foliage (Fig. 7. 6). Alternatively these may be masks. The tomb of William Sharrington in the north chancel aisle of St Cyriac, Lacock, Wiltshire, bears similar heads in profile, the edges of the faces dissolving into leaves. The tomb dates to c.1566. The capitals beneath the other arch suggest thirteenth-century work, the carving of the heads, foliage, and the pilasters of the columns themselves all very different. On these images the foliage appears to sprout out of the ears of the youthful male heads.

Witchampton, Dorset St Mary, St Cuthberga and All Saints. Restored in the nineteenth-century, only the tower remains as genuine late medieval work. This dates to the fifteenth century. The south transept dates to 1832, while the chancel, nave and north transept were rebuilt in 1844 (Almack, 1918: 118; RCHM(E), 1975: 104-105).

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Sculpture

I. Corbels, interior of tower, 15th century.

I. Two corbels bearing similar designs, each one set opposite the other on the north and south sides of the easternmost tower arch.

1) (N side) Boldly carved grimacing human face with pointed chin and heavy oval eyes. Two spheres, to which are attached bat-like wings, appear on either side.

2) (S side) Beast head carved in a similar style. The face is characterised by pointed ears, a wide grimacing mouth and a nose decorated with three spherical lumps. Again, there are two spheres with bat wings on either side of the face.

Peter Knight illustrates these carvings (1998: 80, Plate 31) and believes that they are phallic symbols; 'Four dragon-winged balls are visible. The long, bearded Celtic-style heads with phallic noses rise up from between these spheres' (1998: 79). However, the hybrid beast figure with ball-joint wings can be found elsewhere, for example, on the south side of the nave at Sherborne Abbey. Any phallic significance is tenuous.

Worth Matravers St Nicholas. Norman church consisting of a west tower, nave and chancel, all of which date to c. 1100, with a late medieval south porch. In the fourteenth century a south chapel or transept was built onto the nave; this was demolished in the eighteenth century. In the thirteenth century the chancel was rebuilt, except for parts of the north wall. The east wall was rebuilt in the fourteenth century. Extensive restoration occurred between 1869 and 1872, which may compromise the authenticity of the extensive corbel-table on the north and south sides of the nave and chancel. Indeed, the Royal Commission suggests that the corbel-tables are reset although the pieces themselves are original to the site (RCHM(E), 1970a: 410-411).

Sculpture

   I.   Corbels, exterior north and south sides of the nave and chancel, 12th century.

   II.   Other carvings: A) tympanum; B) various fragments; C) tower corbels.

I. South side of the nave, west to east:

1) Two human heads carved on the same corbel, not placed at the very edge of the wall but tucked behind a buttress (contrast with the paired heads at the NW and SW corners of the nave at nearby Studland). Each face looks in slightly opposite directions.

2) Plain, rounded human head, staring straight out from the wall.

3) As above, but upon a wider corbel.

4) Weathered beast head with mouth slightly open. Like the human heads it is rounded and chunky in its appearance.

5) Simply carved beast head with snout, flat nose and pointed ears, the eyes set low down beneath them.

6) Human head with simple features and a chin that tapers to a point – the classic inverted pear shape of the severed head motif.

7) As above.

8) As above, but much more weathered.

9) Chunky beast head with a wide oval mouth, eyes above the corners and thick forelimbs springing from below the corners of the mouth.

10) Cylinder, each end carved with a cross.

11) As above, but the cylinder is almost twice the length.

12) Beast head with well defined snout, wedge-shaped nose with nostrils, and a row of small indented circles along the top lip to indicate teeth.

The sequence continues on the other side of a broad buttress that also marks the centre of the roof of the south porch.

13) Paired human heads, both looking directly out from the wall. One appears to have a large animal ear on the top side of the head.

14) Single human head with large ears.

15) Human head with beard and striated lines indicating hair on the top and sides of the head.

16) Beast head with flat-ended snout, similar to many at Studland. Any other features are concealed by lichen and the effects of weathering.

17) Simple rounded human head with oval eyes, wedge nose and thin oval mouth.

18) Wide, weathered human head with closed eyes.

19) Beast with thick forelimbs between which appears a small head.

20) Probably a complex carving originally but now reduced to an incomprehensible mass of lichen and crumbling irregular masonry.

21) Pair of human heads, in a poor condition. The basic features remain, however.

22) Human head with off centre wedge nose.

23) Pair of heads, badly weathered. One may have been a beast head.

With the exception of no. 13, all the corbels in this bay have had parts cut out of their top most edge. This part of the nave was once the location of the fourteenth-century south chapel that was taken down in the eighteenth century, and would suggest that the corbels were cut into to take the ends of roof beams or related structural woodwork. This means that the corbels here are in their original medieval situ.

South side of the chancel, west to east:

24) Paired beast heads with straight horns and ears beneath them, large oval eyes, striated face, open mouths and teeth indicated by long straight grooves.

25) Wide beast head with open mouth and slightly protruding tongue, small pointed ears on the top corners of the head, large eyes set beneath them and a wedge nose.

26) Wide and flat beast head with broad snout and mouth that runs completely from one side of the head to the other. There is a protruding tongue, wedge-shaped nose and long pointed ears on the top corners of the head.

27) Head with a leg on each side – a gryllus. Lines are carved into the face, around the mouth.

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28) Lion in profile, head turned to its left to face the viewer. A thick tail folds over its back.

29) Beast head in the shape of a boar's head but without the tusks. Other than rounded ears on the corners of the head, few other features are discernible.

30) Feline beast head with open mouth and protruding tongue, large oval eyes, square nose, and hair on the top of the head between the rounded ears.

31) Pair of human heads with simple features, one wearing some form of cap.

32) Human head with animal legs on each side that end in hooves.

33) Human head with thick arms on either side.

34) Human head wearing a thick ribbed hat.

North side of the chancel, east to west:

35) Pair of beast heads, one with prominent eyes, grinning mouth and rounded ears, the other with pointed ears.

36) Bird or bat figure with wings partially outstretched.

37) Damaged beast head with pointed ears.

38) Human figure constrained by the wrists and ankles as if in some form of stocks. The image is too weathered to make it out with any certainty.

39) Broad feline beast head with grooved protruding tongue and wide mouth, pointed ears and weathered face.

40) Sheela-na-gig. Squatting figure with oversize head and legs parted to reveal the genitals. Her left hand reaches down between the legs, her right hand rests on the belly. The figure has rounded, broad, disc-like feet (Fig. 9. 8).

41) Beak head with pointed ears and something held in its beak.

42) Highly eroded beast head with tapering snout, rectangular nose and pointed ears.

North side of the nave, east to west:

43) Simply carved animal head, fairly cylindrical with flat-ended snout, triangular ears and small oval eyes directly beneath.

44) Cylinder with a cross carved into each end.

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45) Simple human head with small arms and tiny hands that come from beneath the chin to grip the lower jaw. Wedge nose and small eyes set very high up on the face.

46) Geometric design.

47) Eroded human head, the basic features still visible.

48) Grimacing human head, quite heavily weathered.

49) Human head, badly weathered.

50) Geometric design based upon intersecting cylinders.

51) Weathered rounded human head.

52) Human head with pointed chin.

53) As above.

54) Round faced beast head without ears, a flat-ended snout and open mouth.

55) Human head, highly weathered so few features are discernible.

56) Wide beast head with long pointed ears, snout, and grinning open mouth.

57) Beast head with small pointed ears, large eyes, large and broad wedge nose with pronounced nostrils, flat-ended snout and open mouth lined with triangular teeth.

58) This carving may have begun as a beast head, but the lower half is missing, perhaps it broke in two? The underside where the jaw should be has been neatly finished and carved with a circle enclosing a cross.

59) Human head with pointed chin and wearing some form of headdress.

60) Human head with big disc-like ears.

61) Cylinder with a cross design at each end.

62) Human head with big ears.

63) Beast head with broad, tapering snout with a flat end, thin wedge nose, eyes placed very close together, and large pointed ears.

64) Beast head similar to above but much less broad and fewer facial features are visible. The mouth is open.

II. Other carvings.

A) The tympanum is carved with the Coronation of the Virgin with two attendant angels and is badly damaged, having split into two pieces at some point in its history.

B) Fragments. In the south wall of the chancel there is a reset corbel of a head whose headdress is made from two beast heads. In the south porch are various late medieval fragments of carving that may have come from the former south chapel or from elsewhere.

C) The corbels on the four faces of the west tower are for the most part plain or carved with geometric motifs such as cylinders or grooves.

Hampshire

Alton St Lawrence. Essentially a fifteenth-century church constructed from local stone and flints. Structurally it consists of a nave and chancel of seven bays without any division, and a south aisle of the same length divided midway by a late eleventh-century tower. Of possible Saxon date is the font in the south aisle, carved from one solid block of stone and without decoration (a Saxon township grew up here from c. 500); there are also fragments of carved stone set into the south wall of the south aisle (Hope, 1903; Couper, 1995).

Sculpture

I.   Capitals, base of crossing tower, c1070-1090.

II.   Corbels, interior of south aisle, nave, chancel, and south chapel, 15th century.

I. Capitals, base of crossing tower, c.1070-1090.

The tower crossing consists of four arches of one order supported by four clusters of bonded limestone columns bearing both cushion and composite type capitals. Due to later building work none are now free-standing. Each cluster is carved.

A. Northwest Cluster

1) South capital. The broadest face of the cushion capital (facing south) is carved with a wolf or fox holding a sprig of foliage in its mouth.

2) East capital. Stylised vegetation and geometric designs; furthest north a bird of prey, possibly an owl, one wing trailing behind its back, its legs outstretched, and head turned to the right.

B. Northeast Cluster

1) West capital. Scallop capital flanked by simple foliage sprig designs. On the west face of the main cushion capital there is a representation of a small bird.

2) South capital. Two confronted hooved quadrupeds whose heads are turned 180 degrees in order to bite their erect tails, themselves curved upward through their rear legs. Between the two beasts is a small, stylised foliage sprig with volutes. The westernmost corner (facing west) bears a hybrid winged figure next to a plant.

C. Southeast Cluster

These capitals are almost entirely decorated with volutes and geometric designs. A single human head with the tongue extended appears towards the top of the east face of the central capital.

D. Southwest Cluster

The carvings here are noteworthy for two representations of Green Man heads:

1) Furthest east, taking the west end of the west/east arch, the head has two large and abundant sprigs of foliage growing from its mouth. The foliage droops downward giving the appearance (from a distance) of wings.

2) Almost next to this image, among the capitals taking the southern end of the north/south arch a similar head appears. Yet there are significant differences – foliage only grows from the left side of the mouth; on the right a winged serpent scrolls round, its (upside-down) mouth in the mouth of the Green Man (Fig. 5. 9).

These capitals have been commented on by a number of writers throughout the twentieth century. In 1903 W. H. St John Hope described them as 'rudely ornamented capitals, in which may be seen lingering traces of the classical volute' (1903: 481). Pevsner and Lloyd mention them in the Buildings of England series (1967: 76). Carola Hicks states that the 'capitals of the tower arch at Alton, Hampshire, can be dated to c. 1090 and were designed as a sequence of confronted, backward-turning, tail-biting felines, a backward-turning bird which bites at its own wing, several birds with extended wings, and a lion with a protruding tongue and a tail ending in a leafy tip. Other capital faces are decorated with foliage sprigs' (1993: 264). The guidebook available at the church tells us that '[t]he carvings at the top of the pillars, no doubt by French craftsmen, and again axe work, are unique. The subjects include a wolf devouring a bone, a cock with feet upwards, a pious pelican, a dove, two or three winged cherub faces, a little demon face, and two donkeys lying on their backs and kicking their feet up in the air in their exuberance' (Couper, 1995: 7).

II. Corbels, interior of south aisle, nave, chancel, and south chapel, 15th century.
A discontinuous series of (with one exception) robustly carved busts serve as corbels to the roof beams throughout the church. They share many similarities with the corbels at Holybourne which suggests that the sequences at both churches were carved by the same team. Pevsner and Lloyd date the Holybourne carvings to c.1400; these may well be of a similar date.

A. North side of south aisle, from west to east
1) Head and shoulders of a figure with an extended tongue that rests upon the chin.
2) Head and shoulders of a smiling woman wearing a headdress and some sort of shoulder covering.
3) Head and shoulders of a male with a beard and thick wavy hair that bursts from beneath a cap.

B. South side of nave, from west to east

1) Head and shoulders of a male with short curly hair and a wavy goatee beard.

2) Head and shoulders of a female with hair curled and netted into two thick buns on each side of the head.

3) Male head and shoulders.

C. North side of nave, from west to east

1) Mouth-puller. Human head with disembodied hands, two fingers of each hand pulling apart the corners of the mouth. Teeth are clearly visible. The head has almond-shaped eyes and short curly hair. This is an odd carving in comparison to the rest of the series which suggests that it is reused. Evidence to support this idea may be found in the damage around the edges of the corbel, its comparatively small size, the low relief carving of the face (in comparison to all the other images in this sequence which project from and hide their corbel blocks) and the Romanesque style of the carving. All of which suggests a late 12th or 13th century origin for the image; a possible remainder from the westward extension of the nave that occurred in the twelfth century (Couper, 1995: 9).

2) Head and shoulders of no particularly clear gender, wearing a thick hood and cap.

D. North-east corner of chancel

1) Green Man. Head and shoulders of a figure angled to look into the chancel at about forty-five degrees. From the corners of the mouth emerge two stems of foliage that grow up each side of the face. As with most of the images in this sequence the style is simple and bold with few incised lines. Very similar in style to that at nearby Holybourne.

E. South side of chancel, from east to west

1) Head and shoulders of a male with thick wavy hair, wearing a crown and with a goatee beard.

2) Head and shoulders of a male. The corbel is split in two, but still clear enough to make out – a head with thick wavy hair, a goatee beard, and wearing a cap.

F. North side of south chapel (1-3).

A series of three strikingly similar corbels, each one bearing the head and shoulders of a male figure with short wavy hair protruding from beneath a type of cap.

G. South side of south chapel, from east to west

1) Head and shoulders of a male with wavy hair to the shoulders and a tassel ended scarf tucked into a coat.

2) Head and shoulders of a male with a plump face, wavy hair and wearing a thick-collared garment.

Beaulieu Blessed Virgin and Holy Child. The present church is the former refectory of the Cistercian abbey built in the early thirteenth century, hence the unusual orientation (the altar is at the south end). There is no architectural division between nave and chancel nor any additional chapels or aisles (Brakspear, 1911; Pevsner and Lloyd, 1967: 96).

Sculpture

I.   Roof bosses, throughout the length of the building, 15th century.

I. One long barrel vaulted roof runs the length of the building and bears 84 wooden roof bosses. Most of these are medieval in date. They have been painted this century. The majority of the bosses depict foliate patterns or heraldic shields; a few are figurative. The style of carving of much of the figurative work, especially the heads, together with the preponderance of Tudor rose style flower and leaf designs suggests fifteenth century work – see the bosses in the south aisle at St Mary and St Melor in Amesbury for comparison.

There are twelve ribs (orientated east/west) each with seven bosses (individual bosses are numbered along the rib on which they appear from east to west; ribs are

recorded alphabetically from north to south). Only the figurative bosses are recorded below.

Rib E

Boss 2) Human head with a long protruding tongue.

Rib F

Boss 2) A lion in profile with its head turned over its shoulder. The tail curves up between its hind legs.

Boss 3) A stag in profile whose tail curves tightly upward between its hind legs.

Boss 6) Three fish, intertwined like a knotwork motif.

Rib G

Boss 2) A bearded head (the beard is thick and grows voluminously from the chin) wearing a hat upon which is a Star of David symbol surrounding a heart.

Boss 5) A seated stag in profile turning its head to look at the viewer. Behind its hindquarters there is a flourishing tree.

Rib H

Boss 2) A bearded head (again, the beard a goatee) wearing an ornate cap.

Rib I

Boss 2) Head of a mitred cleric.

Boss 6) Head of a woman wearing a wimple.

Rib J

Boss 2) Crowned and bearded male head.

Boss 6) Crowned female head with long flowing hair.

Rib K

Boss 2) Head of a mitred cleric.

Boss 6) Crowned male head

Rib L.

Boss 2) A bearded head.

Boss 6) Head extending a long drooping tongue (Fig. 6. 11b).

Binstead, Isle of Wight Holy Cross. Parish church near to Quarr Abbey with a nave and chancel built of local stone. The church was probably built for the use of workers in the quarries c1150. However, following a drastic restoration in 1844 in which the nave was pulled down and rebuilt, little medieval work survives (Stone, 1912).

Sculpture

I.   Two voussoirs, exterior west wall of the nave, 12th century.

II.   Carved keystone, arch forming the entrance to the churchyard from the south-east, 12th century (?)

I. Two voussoirs, exterior west wall of the nave, 12th century. Each voussoir is reset above the apex of a lancet window.

1) (NW) Griffin amongst foliage. A long tail curves through the rear legs (illustrated on p8).

2) (SW) Inverted horse with splayed legs, twisting its head backwards over its body to bite the tail.

P. G. Stone suggests that these carvings were originally from the nave that was rebuilt in 1844 (1912: 154). Cox is more specific, believing the sculptures to be from the original chancel arch that was destroyed in the Victorian remodelling (1911: 37). However, Stone also notes that late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century records show that 'the church originally consisted of a nave and chancel, separated by a plain semicircular arch springing from roughly carved Romanesque imposts' (1912: 154). The chancel arch does not, therefore, sound like the likely source for these two

voussoirs. Indeed, they may not have come from the church itself, but may have been taken from Quarr Abbey.

II. Carved keystone, arch forming the entrance to the churchyard from the south-east, 12th century (?)

Above the old north door that now forms an entrance gate into the churchyard from the south-east is a carving of a Sheela-na-gig (Fig. 9. 11). The figure kneels with her spindly legs apart upon the head of an animal, her arms coming down towards her genitals. The animal head appears to be muzzled and resembles a bear. It rests its forepaws on the sides of its snout. The head of the figure bears remarkable similarities to the head over the apex of the Norman south door at Yaverland, also on the Isle of Wight.

Holybourne Holy Rood. Rural church consisting of a thirteenth-century chancel with modern north chapel, twelfth-century nave with modern north aisle replacing one of the fifteenth century, and a twelfth-century west tower with shingled wooden spire. In the fifteenth century the nave walls were heightened and the north arcade of two bays built (Peers, 1903).

Sculpture

      I.   Corbels, interior of nave, early 15th century.

I. A series of six carved corbels bearing marked similarities to the series at Alton.

A. North side of nave, west to east

1) Damaged.

2) Head and shoulders of a man with short, curly hair and wearing a cap.

3) Head and shoulders of a woman. Her head is angled to look into the nave.

B. South side of nave, east to west

1) Green man. Foliage grows from his mouth to make a wreath like shape around his face (Fig. 5. 29).
2) Head and shoulders of a man with short curly hair. Wears a cap.
3) Missing.

Milford-on-sea All Saints. Parish church dating from the twelfth century and consisting of a west tower, aisled nave of three bays, north and south transepts and chapels, and a long chancel (Harley and Locke, 1912).

Sculpture

I.   Corbel-table, exterior of tower, c.1200-1250.

I.   Roof bosses, east end of building, mid-17th century.

I. Corbel-table, exterior of tower, c.1200-1250.

A series of carved and blank corbels surround the top of the tower. All the carved corbels are plainly carved into human or animal heads – compare with those on the tower at Bishop's Cannings.

A. South side of tower, west to east
1) (SW corner) Double-head. A corbel on the corner carved into two heads, each head at ninety degrees from each other in order to look out from its respective wall. These double head corbels are to be found on each corner of the tower. The closest parallels are with the church of St. Nicholas in Studland (Dorset) which, although it has no tower does have double head corbels of Romanesque date on the NW and SW corners of the nave. At Studland they are animal and human heads, the human head in each case closest to the corner of the building and turned 45 degrees. The Milford heads on each corner corbel, although unique in each case, are both human and more serene than the wild, mouth-pulling, tongue-lolling Romanesque carvings at Studland.
2) Blank.

3) Human head with open mouth and tongue stuck out.

4) Blank.

5) Human head with open mouth and tongue stuck out.

6) Blank.

7) Grinning human head.

8) Blank.

9) Beast head, quite heavily weathered.

10) Blank.

11) (SE corner) Double-head corbel: south head.

B. East face, south to north (Fig. 6. 8)

1) (SE corner) Double-head corbel: east head.

2) Staring head.

3) Head with tongue stuck out.

4) Skeletal head.

5) Grimacing head.

6) Smiling head.

7) Smiling head.

8) Smiling head.

9) Blank.

10) (NE corner) Double-head corbel: east head.

C. North face, east to west

1) (NE corner) Double-head corbel: north head.

2) Blank.

3) Blank.

4) Blank.

5) Grimacing head.

6) Head with big lips and open mouth, tongue out.

7) Destroyed.

8) Animal head with pointed ears.

9) Beast head with big open mouth.

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10) Blank.

11) (NW corner) Double-head corbel: north head, with tongue out.

D. West face, north to south

1) (NW corner) Double-head corbel: west head, with contorted mouth.

2) Head crying out as though in pain.

3) Blank.

4) Blank.

5) Frog-like head, with teeth.

6) Blank.

7) Head looking down to the ground, with short hair.

8) Blank.

9) Fat head.

10) Blank.

11) (SW corner) Double-head corbel: west head, mouth open.

II. Roof bosses, chancel, east end of nave, north and south transepts, mid-17th century.

Fifty-four bosses, two of which bear the dates 1639 and 1640. Numbering refers to the plan (see Fig. A1. 1).

1) Bearded head with big curled hair and ornate headdress, angled to look into the chancel.

2) Female head with red and gold headdress (above altar).

3) Head with ornate and richly coloured headdress. Long moustaches (or foliage?).

4) Ornate foliage design.

5) Male head with gold and brown beard, wavy hair, and a red and gold turban.

6) Blue and gold foliage design.

7) Staring foliate head with arrow-tongued serpent issuing from the mouth.

8) Male head with moustache and blue headdress.

9) Female head wearing a blue headdress on the back of her head; long, wavy gold and orange hair hangs to her shoulders.

10) Staring male head with a frog emerging from the mouth.

11) Green Man with a stem entering and leaving the mouth.

12) Acorns and foliage.

13) Red cat head.

14) Crowned female head.

15) Green Man, one stem emerging from the centre of his mouth.

16) Bearded head playing a pipe.

17) Head with slight beard and blue headdress.

18) Head with beard and straight hair to the shoulders.

19) Female demifigure with a green reptile on her headdress. On her bodice the date 1639 appears.

20) Female head.

21) Mermaid: she appears as a demifigure of a naked woman with long, curly gold hair streaming down her back. She holds her flipper-like hands together in prayer. At her waist, scales begin.

22) Female head.

23) Green Man.

24) Female head wearing a red cap.

25) Head with gold, curly hair, double chin and open mouth.

26) Fierce-looking lion.

27) Green Man with mouth wide open. The leaves that grow out of his forehead have been painted gold.

28) Green Man with mouth wide open and tongue lolling out. Like number 26 the leaves are painted gold.

29) Boss bearing the date 1640.

30) Bearded head in foliage.

31) Foliage design.

32) Staring foliate head with moustache.

33) Crowned female head and lilac cascading headdress.

34) Rectangular geometric design.

35) Female head in blue headdress.

36) Head with long beard.

37) Rectangular geometric design.

38) Head with short wavy hair, playing a pipe.

39-43) Rectangular geometric design.

44) Green Man.

45) Rectangular geometric design.

46) Soldier wearing a metal helmet. He appears to be laughing.

47) Crowned thistle.

48) Bearded head wearing an ornate blue and gold headdress.

49) Bearded head wearing a jester style headdress.

50) Green Man; flowering plants grow from his nose.

51) Male head wearing a blue and white striped turban.

52) Foliage.

53) Male head wearing a red and gold turban and a long beard.

54) Female head with a split tongue sticking out of her mouth.

Inside the church there is a photograph of each boss and a commentary about them within a picture frame upon the north wall. This is not, however, accurate.

Nately Scures St Swithun. Small, twelfth-century church consisting of a nave and apsidal chancel with no structural division (Brough *et al*, 1911b).

Sculpture

I.   Capitals, exterior of the north door, c.1150-1200.

I.

1) This capital, originally in the position now occupied by a modern replacement (the east side of the door, as shown in Brough, 1911b: plate facing p154), can be found inside the church set into the south-west corner of the nave (Fig. 8. 4). There is some damage to the stone but the image is still clear; a mermaid with her left hand upon her waist and her single tail bent up behind and to her left. Foliage sprigs are visible in the background. A curious lollipop-shaped item

appears next to her left elbow; this might represent a mirror. Pevsner and Lloyd date the door to c. 1200 (1967: 343). Keyser suggests an earlier date of soon after the mid-twelfth century (1915: 9).

2) Damaged.

Newnham St Nicholas. Parish church dating to the twelfth century (as suggested by the chancel arch, west door of the nave, and the south and east doorways of the tower). In 1846-8 major restoration work was carried out which destroyed much of the evidence of the history of the building. In this period the northwest tower was added to the nave and chancel (Brough *et al*, 1911c; Bell, 1993).

Sculpture
I.   Capitals, exterior of west door, late 12th century.

I. Two capitals.

1) (NW) Foliage.
2) (SW) Green beast head. Keyser describes the image as a 'human head with long ears on the angle, and scroll foliage coming from the mouth and spread over the north and west faces of the capital' (1915: 5). Similar heads occur on the south door and certain ambulatory capitals at Romsey Abbey.

Old Basing St Mary. Rectangular in plan since the early sixteenth century the church of St Mary has mixed brick and ashlar masonry and consists of a nave, central tower and chancel flanked on each side by aisles and chapels (Brough *et al*, 1911a).

Sculpture
I.   Gargoyles and grotesques, exterior of north and south chapels and west end of nave, late 15th/early 16th century (HANTS08).

I.

A. West end of the nave and nave aisles, two large and possibly reset stone carvings.

1) (NW) Mouth-puller gargoyle with horns (Fig. 6. 13).

2) (SW) Grotesque; bearded man in cap and robed garment.

B. South side of south chancel aisle, west to east

1) Grotesque; smiling face.

2) Grotesque; head and shoulders of man with beard.

3) Grotesque; head and shoulders of man wearing a high-collared garment.

4) Grotesque; feline head with mouth open.

5) Gargoyle; simple head.

6) Grotesque; head of a lion.

7) Gargoyle; beast head.

C. North side of north chancel aisle, east to west

1) Grotesque; demifigure with hair to the shoulders, wearing a cap and jacket with puffed sleeves.

2) Gargoyle; bald human head with heavy jowls and closed mouth. The hole for the water cuts through his chin and neck.

3) Gargoyle; human head with mouth stretched wide open. Wears some form of cap.

4) Gargoyle; head of a lion with wide open mouth.

5) Gargoyle; human head with open mouth.

6) Grotesque; damaged human head with prominent lips and teeth.

7) Grotesque; demi-figure of a man in a long-sleeved top.

The size of these carvings is striking; some of the figures (especially no. 10) are more like freestanding sculptures than architectural ones.
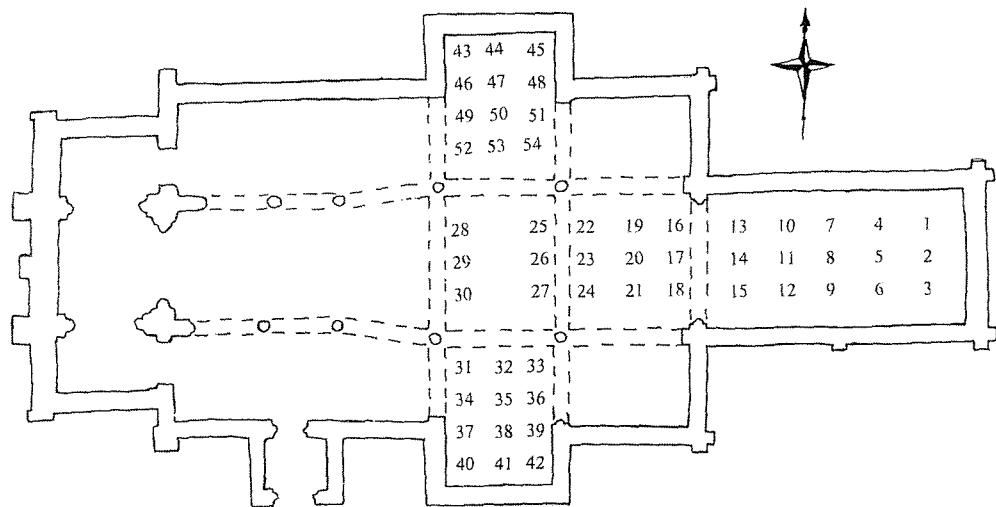
Figure A1. 1 Plan of the church at Milford-on-sea to show the position of the roof bosses.
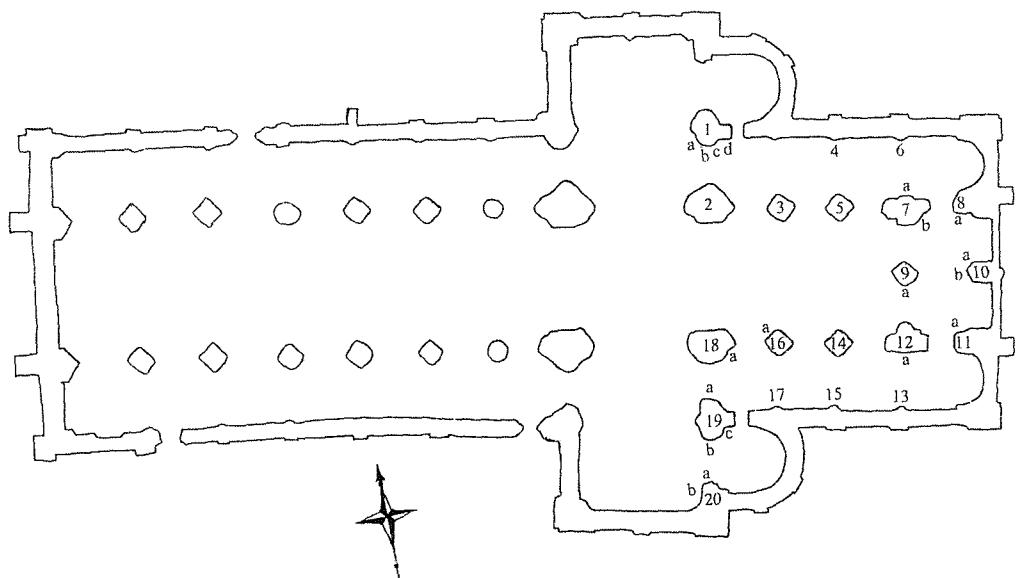
Figure A1. 2 Plan of Romsey Abbey to show the position of the capitals in the east end of the building.

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Romsey Abbey Church of St Mary and St Ethelflaeda. Edward the Elder, son of Alfred the Great first established a small nunnery here in 907. Some years later, Edgar (959-975) reorganized the nunnery according to the rule of St Benedict. However, a raid by the Danes in 994 led to the buildings being destroyed and the community fleeing to Winchester.

Around 1000 the nunnery was rebuilt. Two carved stone roods still exist from this second phase of Saxon building. The church that stands today though is the product of a complete rebuild that commenced in the early twelfth century. This falls into two broad phases. First, the choir and transepts were completed between 1120 and 1140. Originally a twin-celled Lady chapel stood at the most eastern point, accessible from the retrochoir (this was destroyed in the sixteenth century). The second stage of Romanesque building falls between 1150 and 1180. The work completed in this phase includes the easternmost four bays of the nave while the early thirteenth century witnessed the completion of three additional bays at the west end. Essentially, this is the building that stands today.

Up until 1400 the people of Romsey had used the north aisle and transept as their parish church. However, in the early fifteenth century this was enlarged; a new aisle was added to the north wall of the nave and the previously external wall pierced with arches. The north transept, with its apsidal east end, formed the chancel and sanctuary of this now sizeable church which came to be known as St Lawrence.

In 1539 the Abbey was suppressed and the community of nuns dispersed. In 1544 the entire building was bought by the town for use as a parish church and the extra aisle that had once served the townspeople was demolished. However, by the mid-eighteenth century the building had fallen into a ruinous state, and it was not until the incumbency of the Reverend Edward Lyon Berthon (Vicar from 1860-1892) that the building was restored. The restoration work carried out included re-roofing the entire nave (Hearn, 1975; Walker, 1988: 14-16).

Sculpture

I.   Capitals, interior of north and south transepts and choir aisles, retrochoir, c.1120-1150.

II.   Corbels, exterior of south transeptal apse, south, east, and north sides of choir, north transeptal apse, c.1120-1150.

III.   Corbels, exterior of nave aisles, mid-late 12th century.

IV.   Corbels, exterior of north side of nave, the four bays furthest east, late 12th century.

V.   Capitals, exterior of the south door, mid-late 12th century.

VI.   Corbels, exterior of north transept, west face, mid-12th century.

VII.   Carved stone, set into the exterior of the west face of the north transept, possibly 12th-century.

I. Capitals, north and south transepts and choir aisles, retrochoir, c.1120-1150.

For precise location of capitals refer to the plan (Fig. A1. 2).

1a) Scroll foliage.

1b) Two reptilian creatures biting upon swirling plant stems.

1c) Green animal head and interlaced foliage.

1d) Owl.

2, 3, 4, 5, 6: All plain scallop capitals.

7a) Scene set on a battlefield. Body parts are littered all around. In the centre a warrior pulls the beard of a king. Each figure holds a sword, the blade of each restrained by an angel. At the edges of the carving birds and a strange horse-like creature flee with human body parts.

7b) Two dragons with their necks intertwined. Above them are lion-like creatures, one with a human head.

8a) A lion and a human figure among scrolling stems. The figure attacks the lion with a sword held in his right hand. The lion has a well-defined mane and a tail that curves up between his rear legs to sprout into foliage.

9a) Two Green Animals, addorsed. On each, thick stems curl out of smiling, almost human faces. Tails are curved tightly up through the rear legs and sprout into

fleur-de-lys. A strip has been cut from the centre of the carving at some point, possibly to take one end of a screen. Very similar to capital 10b.

10a) Green Animal head disgorging scrolling stems.

10b) Two Green Animals, addorsed. Foliage sprouts from the mouth and the tip of the tail of each creature (Fig. 5. 5). c) Figurative scene, possibly one of the 'labours of the month' (September?). Two men appear to be reaping corn. One of them carries a bushel on his back.

11a) A figure carrying a bag upon his back holding the tail of a saddled horse. The horse looks over its shoulder.

12a) Figurative scene in three parts. Furthest west a seated king and an angel hold a V-shaped scroll which reads 'Robert me fecit' (Robert made me). In the centre a standing king admires an elongated pyramid which he holds in his hand. In the most easterly part two seated and cloaked figures hold a V-shaped scroll which may read 'Robert tute consule' although the inscription is obscure. Between the arms of the 'V' is a grinning human head.

13 Corinthian style capital.

14 Apart from one capital carved into scrolling foliage all here are plain scallops.

15 Scallop capital decorated with foliage and animals.

16a) Two horses, confronted

16b) Foliage.

17 Scallop capital decorated with foliage, a lion's head devouring a human, and a horizontal human figure (Fig. 6. 4).

18a) Green animal head disgorging interlaced foliage.

19a) Scallop capital decorated with foliage, two lion's with their tails curved up between their legs, and two birds with their wings extended.

19b) Scallop capital decorated with animals and foliage. c) Green Man (Fig. 5. 14).

20a) Two dragons with their necks intertwined.

20b) Foliage design incorporating confronted Green animal heads.

II. Corbels, exterior of south transeptal apse, south, east, and north sides of choir, north transeptal apse, c.1120-1150.

A. South transeptal apse (sequence runs south to north)

1) Two figures constrained by the neck as if in one garment.

2) Head with small arms, playing two pipes.

3) Double-head (human); each face is turned ninety degrees from the other.

4) Beast heads with wide open mouth and feline ears.

5) As above.

6) Partly finished animal head and forelegs.

7) Head with long thin pointed beard growing from the chin, mouth slightly open. Two hands rest on the cheeks.

8) Beast head with wide open mouth and feline ears. Its hands grip the lower part of its jaw.

9) Head between two legs (acrobat?). The mouth is slightly open and a thin moustache is visible. The chin is sharply divided into two points.

10) Head with a right arm, the hand of which grips its chin.

11) Beast head with huge jaws within which appears a human figure with crossed arms (Fig. 6. 3a).

12) Missing.

13) Chevron ornament.

14) Beast head with open mouth. The carving is quite badly damaged.

B. South side of chancel, west to east

1) Beast head with wide open mouth and large tongue. Feline-looking.

2) A ram's head with pointed ears, open mouth and slightly protruding tongue. In its human-looking right hand it holds the figure of a man.

3) Beast head with wide open mouth, teeth and pointed ears.

4) Blemya; this is a human monster without a head whose face appears on its chest.

5) Human/animal head with open mouth, moustache and pointed feline ears.

6) Head with slightly open mouth, long thin moustache and double-pointed chin.

7) Beast head with widely opened mouth, numerous teeth, pointed tongue and pointed feline ears.

8) Beast head with open mouth, large eyes and pointed ears.

9) Heavily eroded corbel; enough remains, however, to suggest that it was once a double-head.

10) Modern.

11) Beast head with open mouth, pointed tongue, teeth and feline ears.

12) Figure of a musician.

13) Modern.

14) Double-head; two heads angled out from the corbel at forty-five degrees.

15) Damaged.

16) Double-head, the heads straight on rather than angled out.

C. East end of chancel, south to north

1) A bundle of sticks tied together by a rope.

2) Chevron ornament.

3) Two figures; one has a larger head than the other one and an extended tongue that flops down over the chin.

4) Beast head with open mouth, quite badly eroded.

5) Double-head; the two heads are angled out at forty-five degrees.

6) Boar's head.

7) Beast head with widely opened mouth, sharp teeth, pointed tongue and pointed ears.

8) Beast head with open mouth, visible teeth and pointed ears.

9) Beast head with long pointed ears and open mouth.

D. North side of chancel aisle, east to west

1) Beast head with open mouth.

2) Chevron ornament.

3) Beast head with wide open mouth within which appears a human head.

4) Bundle of sticks tied together by a rope.

5) Hybrid mouth-puller head with pointed ears.

6) Face-contorter; head with a left hand that pulls its chin to one side.

7) Heavily eroded image of a bat or owl.

8) Owl.

9) Beast head with widely opened mouth within which appears a human head.

10) Blemya type image.

11) Double-head type carving, only here the figure on the west half of the corbel is not a corresponding head looking out but a simian eating a spherical object.

12) Beast head with gaping mouth, broad tongue, well-defined teeth and pointed ears.

13) Beast head style carving but with decided human characteristics – a stylised moustache and beard.

14) Beast head with long pointed ears and heavily ridged face. The mouth is, unusually, closed.

15) Chevron ornament.

16) Beast head with broad mouth and two hands holding the lower jaw.

17) Human head with long thin moustache and beast-head style pointed ears.

E. North transept, east end of apse (south to north)

1) Demifigure pulling its braided hair.

2) Double-head corbel.

3) Beast head with large open mouth and strongly defined teeth.

4) Bundle of sticks tied by a rope.

5) Plainly carved beast head.

6) Ram's head with protruding tongue.

7) Beast head with open mouth, teeth and incised lines around the eyes.

8) Broad beast head with large teeth and a human figure within its gaping mouth (Fig. 6. 3b).

9) Beast head, quite badly eroded.

10) Reptile among foliage?

11) Double-head similar to 50 but carved in a much simpler manner; the animal head has large lips and pointed ears.

12) Beast head.

13) Beast head with open mouth.

III. Corbels, exterior of nave aisles, mid-late 12th century.

A. North nave aisle. Only the two bays furthest east have carved corbels. The other bays show signs of extensive later medieval alterations. From east to west the sequence runs as follows;

1) Bundle of sticks tied together by a rope.

2) One large animal head next to the full figure of an animal standing up on its rear legs. The heads of both are similar and quite feline in appearance.

3) Beast head with huge open mouth and well-defined teeth (including canines) within which appears a rodent.

4) Two tumblers.

5) Beast head with huge open mouth, well-defined teeth and tongue extended to touch the tip of its nose.

6) Chevron ornament.

7) Bat.

8) Double-head. The head on the eastern side of the corbel is that of a cat with its right paw in its open mouth; the other head is a more conventional human head angled at forty-five degrees.

9) Head with smiling open mouth and wearing a high-collared garment; its right hand grips and twists its chin.

10) Bundle of sticks.

11) Beast head with huge open mouth and well-defined teeth (including canines) with a long extended tongue.

B. South nave aisle. Only one bay (furthest east) of in situ medieval carved corbels remains here. The rest of the sequence is suggestive of Victorian restoration work. From west to east the medieval sequence runs as follows:

1) Beast head with pointed ears and hand-like paws resting on top of its long snout. Its mouth is open.

2) Human head with pointed ears on the corners of its forehead.

3) Double-head; both human heads with deeply incised lines on their faces.

4) A combination of the architectural with the animal – a plain cylinder set horizontally with the lower half of an animal head with an open mouth below.

5) Human head, laughing.

6) Beast head. All the classic features displayed – pointed feline ears, large oval eyes, almost human nose, wide open mouth with prominent teeth and visible tongue.

IV. Corbels, exterior of north side of nave, the four bays furthest east, late 12th century.

A. (In a similar manner to its corresponding nave aisle corbels, the carvings that appear on the south side of the nave have been heavily restored. Unlike the south nave aisle, however, the sequence incorporates some original medieval carvings, although most of these are too weathered to make out with any clarity and are therefore not recorded here). From east to west the sequence runs as follows

1) Geometrical design.

2) Horizontal plain cylinder, quite a common architectural motif throughout this sequence.

3) Head that appears to be wearing a mask.

4) Cylinder.

5) Cylinder decorated with chevron ornament.

6) Cylinder.

7) Cylinder. From the underside a small beast head emerges, its right hand supporting its lower jaw (a similar image occurs on the south side of the nave at the east end).

8) Bundle of sticks tied together by a rope.

9) Cylinder.

10) Beast head.

11) Cylinder.

12) Cylinder decorated with chevron ornament.

13) Architectural piece.

14) Head with suggestions of foliage around the forehead.

15) Cylinder made into a face.

16) Scallop design.

17) Beast head with mouth open but no teeth or tongue.

18) Bundle of sticks tied by a rope.

19) Animal head with open mouth. The short snout suggests a pig.

20) Double head.

21) Chevron ornament.

22) Beast head with a very wide mouth and no teeth.

23) Rectangular geometric design.

24) Cylinder decorated with chevron ornament.

25) Cylinder decorated with fish scale pattern.

26) Musician figure.

27) Double head.

28) Beast head with heavily ridged snout and open mouth but no visible teeth.

29) Animal head. Its mouth is closed and there is a serene look about its face.

30) Startled animal head.

V. Capitals, exterior of the south door, mid-late 12th century.

Richly ornamented doorway of two orders, originally connecting the cloister with the church ('Two orders of shafts, capitals with trails, arch with zigzag, rope, a kind of raspberries, and paterae between arch and hood-mould' Pevsner and Lloyd, 1967: 480). Four carved capitals, west to east as follows;

1)   Green beast head with scroll.

2)   Interlace motif.

3)   Green beast head with scroll foliage (Fig. 5. 12).

4)   Stylised foliage.

Carving 3 bears many similarities to the image on the south capital of the west door at Newnham.

Near this door, in the corner between the west wall of the south transept and the wall of the south nave aisle, there is a heavily weathered corbel. Enough remains of the face to suggest that it is a Green Man carving, originally with stems sprouting out of the corners of the mouth and from the forehead. Its position suggests that it once

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held a statue, perhaps in a similar manner to the carving in the choir of Exeter Cathedral which supports an image of the Virgin and child, or that on the south face of the tower at Abson, south Gloucestershire, which now has an empty niche above it. Both these examples are late medieval. That it is so weathered may suggest that its current position is a secondary one (i.e. it is not *in situ*).

VI. Corbels, exterior of north transept, west face, mid-12th century.

Fifteen corbels. From north to south the sequence runs as follows

1) Beast head, very simply carved and feline in appearance. No teeth or tongue visible.

2) Double head, comprising a human head looking out at a forty-five degree angle and an animal figure looking straight on.

3) Architectural design.

4) Head with heavily ridged face that shows signs of distress. Two skinny arms hold each side of the face.

5) Bundle of sticks tied together by a rope.

6) Beast head with very pointed ears, wide open mouth and teeth.

7) Chevron ornament.

8) Cylinder/beast head with thin, tendril-like moustaches.

9) Cylinder with chevron ornament.

10) Beast head.

11) Architectural design.

12) Rectangular geometric design.

13) Cylinder with a beast head emerging from beneath.

14) Bundle of sticks tied together by a rope.

15) Cylinder with a head attached to the base. This has big eyes and a heavily ridged forehead.

These carvings are much plainer in style than the carvings around the east end of the building (chancel, transepts). Comparable material may be found at Devizes St John (south side of the chancel).

VII. Carved stone, set into the exterior of the west face of the north transept, possibly 12th-century.

The carving presents a naked female figure with disproportionately oversized head, wide, squat body, short, spread legs and angular arms. Her left hand reaches towards her genitals. In her right hand she holds a staff (Fig. 9. 12).

Stylistically the image suggests parallels with some of the twelfth-century figurative corbels on the Abbey. In particular the shape of and the emphasis given to the head is comparable to a number of carvings, indicating a 12th century date for this sculpture. However, the image forms part of the wall that was incorporated into the parish church in the fifteenth century. (The palimpsest of windows beneath the image, as well as the two bays immediately east of the north porch, attest to the addition and later removal of an aisle, which, together with the pre-existing north aisle of the Abbey and its north transept formed the parish church of St Lawrence). It is entirely possible that the image, although carved at an earlier date, may have been inserted during these periods of building.

Sopley St Michael and All Angels. Built from ironstone rubble with dressings of Isle of Wight stone, the church consists of a chancel, nave with north and south transepts and aisles, west tower over the west bay of the nave, and a north porch. Thirteenth-century work may be found in the walls of the chancel and south transept (early) and the north transept (later). The west tower and nave were built in the fourteenth century (Dacombe and Rowe, 1975 [1969]).

Sculpture

I.   North transept, corbels, late 13th or early 14th century.

II.   Other carvings, north transept exterior, late medieval date.

I. Two carved corbels are placed on the north transept, one on the east face of the northeast corner, the other on the west face of the northwest corner. Both corbels are about the same size and both portray similar figures; indeed, they appear to be a pair. They are located in a highly visually accessible location being no more than 15ft high and on the side of the church facing the footpath that runs to the north door. Pevsner and Lloyd date both figures to the mid-fourteenth-century at the earliest (1967: 509); however, it is quite possible that they are earlier, as there is a similar carving on the inside of the transept which is firmly dated to the thirteenth century (see II below).

1) NE corner of transept; horizontal figure with head angled upright and placed closest to the corner of the building (Fig. 9. 16). The head has long straight hair that becomes wavy as it gets longer and flows down the sides of the body. The right arm is slightly bent, the hand resting on the right thigh just above the knee. The left arm has broken off above the elbow. There is much damage to the lower body but what survives of the stonework suggests that the left leg was bent at the knee and angled away from the right one which was extended in a relatively straight line. This would have served to expose the genital area. Considering the nature of the figure on the opposite corner it is highly likely that this was a female exhibitionist carving. There is damage to the chest area as well but a rounded feature just above the broken left arm may suggest that the figure originally had breasts. The face is in good condition with well defined eyes, nose, eyebrows and closed mouth.

2) NW corner of transept; male exhibitionist figure in a horizontal position with the head placed to the corner of the transept and angled upright (Fig. 9. 2). He has long straight hair and a beard upon the chin, a damaged broad nose and ears that stick out from each side of the head. The legs are held upright and close to the body, the feet behind the head and each hand gripping the back of each thigh. A scrotum of generous proportions hangs downward over the back of his right thigh, and the penis is erect against the lower part of his belly.

II. Other carvings. On the north face of the north transept are two reset corbels, probably once carved but now weathered beyond all recognition placed either side of

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a filled in window. Below, the label stops to the main north window are carved from a pale sandstone which has deteriorated, although enough survives to note that these were stylised beasts or faces composed from foliage. There is a carving inside the north transept in a very similar style to the two exhibitionist figures on the outside. This is a small head with protruding tongue and long straight hair at the end of a horizontal mould on the west wall.

Wickham St Nicholas. Following a severe "restoration" in 1862-3, the church is almost entirely modern, built from flint and red brick with some ashlar masonry. Some old features survive in the west door of the tower, the northeast angle of the nave and the north doorway of the chancel. The church consists of a chancel with south chapel, north and south transepts, nave, and west tower (Hendy, 1908: 233-236).

Sculpture
I.   Capitals, west door (reset), 12th century.

I. Romanesque arch carved from red sandstone and consisting of one plain rolled order with triple chevron design on the outer flat face. Two carved capitals, approximately six to seven feet from the ground and quite badly eroded, occur on each side.

1) N capital, W face; centaur with bow and arrow (the symbol of Sagittarius), doubled back on itself and firing an arrow over his equine body towards the top right corner of the capital.

S face; lion standing up upon the rear legs and twisting around so that the head faces the opposite direction to the body. The tail curves tightly upward between the rear legs and ends in a foliate tip. The head has short pointed ears and a thick mane covers the neck. Carved on the corner of the capital and continuing onto the west face there appears to be something being disgorged from the mouth; this might have been a short sprig of foliage. However, it is impossible to verify

this with any degree of accuracy due to the extensive damage this part of the carving has suffered.

2) S capital; Acanthus foliage with a small projecting head for a volute. This is damaged so may have been human or animal.

Winchester Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity, Saints Peter and Paul and St Swithun. A cathedral has stood on this site since the mid-seventh century. The current building is the third, and was dedicated in 1093. Extensive later medieval and modern alterations have changed the length and appearance of the Romanesque cathedral, which now consists of a nave with north and south aisles of eleven bays, north and south transepts, a central crossing tower, a choir and retrochoir with Lady chapel (Peers and Brakspear, 1912; Crook and Kusaba, 1991).

Sculpture

    I.   Corbels, exterior of the north and south transepts, early 12th century.

    II.   Grotesques and Gargoyles, exterior of nave and nave aisles, 14th/15th century.

    III.   Roof bosses, interior of nave aisles.

    IV.   Misericords, choir, 14th/15th century.

    V.   Grotesques and Gargoyles, exterior of chancel aisles, 14th/15th century.

I. Corbels, exterior of the north and south transepts, c.1100-10. South transept, west side, north to south (Fig. 4. 4)

1) Beast head with open, duck-like bill and protruding tongue.
2) Grimacing head.
3) Head turned to the south with big, staring eyes and contorted mouth.
4) Head with small, thin arms and hands that pull at the corners of its mouth.
5) Head turned to the south (similar to 3 above) with one animal type right ear.
6) Head with divided chin.

7) Head turned to the north with grimacing mouth.

8) Staring head wearing some form of headdress.

9) Grimacing head turned to the south displaying numerous teeth.

10) Head staring straight on.

11) Ram's head with curling horns.

12) Angry-looking head turned to the north with heavily contorted mouth and visible teeth.

13) Double beast head corbel. Both heads have open mouths and small pointed ears.

14) Double contorted human head corbel. Each head looks in opposite directions; both heads have fearful expressions and distorted mouths.

15) Staring head.

16) Grimacing head turned to the south.

17) Head with shoked expression – wide eyes and open mouth – with small stick arms and hands that grasp the sides of the face. Also has a pair of skinny legs.

18) Grimacing head turned to look towards the south. Has a heavily contorted mouth and visible teeth.

19) Horned figure pulling at the corners of its mouth.

20) Human head wearing some kind of restraining device that seems to focus on the mouth, which, despite this is open.

21) From here to the end of the series on this side the style of the carvings changes to a more unfinished, less rounded type of head and figure. The first corbel of this different style depicts a head with stocky hands that hold both sides of its face. The mouth is set at right angles to the rest of the head, at its base, similar to some of the carvings at Studland (Dorset).

22) Distorted head with mouth open. The face is very plain and asymmetrical.

23) Double figure corbel; the northernmost figure is smaller than its partner. Style is very simple.

24) Head holding its face with chunky three-fingered hands.

25) Architectural piece, weathered.

26) Head holding its face in its hands; its mouth is open wide.

27) Human animal hybrid. Has the head of a human but with a wide snout-like mouth and two legs that end in hooves.

28) Double figure corbel.

29) Architectural piece, largely obscured by a modern drainpipe.

30) 31-39) This bay has been restored at some point. Most of the corbels are medieval architectural pieces. There is one modern carving, a double head, both figures with grimacing mouths (37); an architectural/human head carving (35); and a medieval double figure corbel (39).

South transept, east side, south to north

Corbels 1-8, like those on the corresponding side, have been reset and display a mixture of carvings weathered beyond recognition, one modern carving – a highly abstract head (6), and one original beast head (5).

9) Double figure corbel, similar to 23 above but not as simply carved. The animal figure to the person's right appears to have horns; certainly, its mouth is open.

10) Human head, very plain. Interestingly, the features of the face are carved in negative relief instead of standing proud.

11) Beast head with pointed ears and open mouth.

12) Human head with asymmetrically set, spiral-like eyes and open mouth at the base.

13) Head with enormous, extended open mouth.

14) Squatting animal/human figure with giant head, human face and pointed ears.

15) Double human and animal corbel. Here the animal appears to be a dog.

16) Architectural piece.

17) Unusual looking beast head, quite architectural in its execution. Large feline ears and heavily emphasized nose. Its mouth is open.

18) Squatting figure with large head (possible exhibitionist?) and contorted mouth.

19) Plain-looking head with a moustache.

20) Human/animal head with heavy jowls and pointed feline ears.

21) Beast head with long open jaws and extended tongue.

22) Rodent-like animal, upside-down.

23) Two animals coupling face to face.

24) Head, fairly plain features.

25) Head with hands pulling its mouth open by the lower jaw.

26) Head with drooping moustaches.

27) Head with large eyes and well-defined face.

28) Head with crooked mouth.

29) Head, too weathered to make out clearly.

30) Beast head with short snout, wide open jaws and pointed ears.

31) Beast head, very similar to its neighbour (30) but with a wider face.

32) Head with staring eyes, open mouth and long moustaches.

33) Expressive, smiling human head with animal ears.

34) Coiled serpent.

35) Beast head with open jaws.

36) Head of a muzzled animal, possibly a bear.

37) Beast head.

North transept, west face, south to north

Twenty-three corbels across three bays, all of which appear to be reset (the Romanesque work has been transformed by later medieval building work on this face of the north transept). Most of the corbels here are plain or carved into simple architectural shapes or geometric designs. As on the other faces the corbels are placed beneath a plain parapet.

1) Pair of human heads looking in opposite directions, and very weathered.

2) Cylinder.

3) Plain.

4) Plain.

5) Geometric design, highly weathered.

6) Plain.

7) Pair of human heads looking out from the wall in at ninety degrees from each other.

8) Plain.

9) Plain.

10) Plain.

11) Bundle of sticks tied by a rope.

12) Geometric design based upon intersecting cylinders.

13) Horizontal ribbing.

14) Plain.

15) Plain, but possibly an eroded geometric design.

16) Plain.

17) Vertical ribbing.

18) Plain.

19) Plain.

20) Weathered architectural design.

21) As above.

22) Geometric design.

23) As above.

North transept, east face, south to north

1) Head with arms that sprout from just above the ears. The right hand rests upon the right eye, the left hand pulls at the edge of the wide open mouth.

2) Beast head.

3) Seated figure, small arms holding its massive head.

4) Human head with pointed, cat-like ears.

5) Beast head with open mouth.

6) Double head corbel, both heads looking in opposite directions.

7) Beast head with open mouth and protruding tongue.

8) Geometric design.

9) Head with moustaches.

10) Geometric design.

11) Squatting figure.

12) Tumbler, head appears through upturned legs.

13) Plain head.

14) Head with long beard.

15) Staring head.

16) Beast head with wide open mouth.

17) Weathered.

18) Bearded, squatting figure.

19) Beast head with open mouth.

20) Weathered.

21) Human head.

22) Head with beard.

23) Geometric design.

24) Beast head chomping on a stick.

25) Head with small hands pulling at its mouth.

26) Modern

27) Modern

28) Modern

29) Destroyed.

30) Damaged

31) Damaged

32) Human head.

33) Geometric design

34) Geometric design.

35) Two heads.

36) Geometric design.

II. A moulded string course runs along the top of the nave aisles and the nave, and supports numerous images, many of which, particularly those on the north side of the building, are extremely weathered and near impossible to decipher. However, a number of similar types of recurring image can be discerned. On the south side of the nave and the south nave aisle the predominant image is that of the *gryllus* – a face, often of an animal, set upon two legs (Camille, 1992: 37-40).

III. (The purely foliate or heraldic bosses are not listed below).

A. North aisle, west to east

Bay 5) A long-haired demi-figure playing bagpipes; a mouth-puller.

Bay 6) Human head with long, curly hair and enclosed by a frame of leaves.

Bay 9) Head of a beast with protruding tongue and tusks.

Bay 11) As above; mouth-puller with protruding tongue. In place of hair the crown of the head is covered with oak leaves and acorns.

Bay 12) (Lower vaulting) green man, leaves sprouting from the mouth; (upper vaulting) mouth-puller, tongue protruding.

B. South aisle, west to east:

Bay 4) A sow with three sucking pigs. The sow is held in the mouth of a lion; a head with a forked beard and long, drooping moustaches.

Bay 5) Human head with beard and long, curly hair; green man, two large oak leaves sprouting from his mouth, two more leaves coming from the top of the nose; a face surrounded by four flowers which hide all the head except the nose, eyes, forehead and part of the mouth; green man, tongue protruding; a head with forked beard and long hair.

Bay 6) Lion with a protruding tongue; a woman's head, a close-fitting headdress makes only the face visible. Her face is surrounded by foliage; a head with a beard and long wavy hair.

Bay 7) Human head with beard and long wavy hair. Cave (1934: 50) suggests that it is the head of Christ or of God the Father because it is represented on a circular disc reminiscent of a halo; demi-figure of an angel playing a citole; an eagle holding a lamb in its beak and talons; a lion in crouching position with its head touching one of its hind legs; green man, oak leaves for hair, oak leaves sprouting from the corner of each eye.

Bay 8) Male human head surrounded by foliage. He holds two acorns in his mouth; green man; a woman's head with a close-fitting headdress within a circle of leaves; a hart attached by a chain to a small oak stump.

Bay 9) Two demi-figures clothed in animal skins. Adam and Eve? That the man carries an apple would seem to suggest this is the case; a demi-figure playing on a double-pipe. On each side of the boss is a head, at the base are sheep. Cave suggests that this is meant to represent one of the shepherds at the Nativity (1934: 51); a demi-figure surrounded by foliage; a hooded demi-figure with a beard; a head with a beard and long hair; two beasts, one of which is winged, and one is biting the other on the back.

Bay 10) Two monks with hoods with their hands on a book which is between them on a book-rest. Between the two figures is a dog wearing a hood, who rests one paw

on the book; four birds, one twice the size of the others; demi-figure of a man dressed in a hood. He holds a rope attached to the horns of a bull; head of a bearded, long-haired man around whose head is a plaited garland. Cave suggests that this meant the head of Christ with a crown of thorns (1934: 52); a hooded head; foliate head; green man, leaves grow out of the mouth, from the outer corners of the eyes, and from the middle of the forehead; a demon with bat's wings; a demi-figure of an angel holding a viol and bow; a man with beard and long hair holding a stem of a vine from which clusters of grapes hang; the head of a man with beard and long hair; another head with a beard and long hair; similar head surrounded by oak leaves. Bay 12) The gateway of a castle flanked by two towers, in the centre of the courtyard of which there is a dragon; head of a man with long hair and a beard.

IV. Misericords. A full list of the misericords can be found in Remnant, 1969: 56-59 and Callé, 1994, the latter with an accompanying photographic record.

V. Grotesques and gargoyles, exterior of chancel aisles.
Various figures may be found in this area, many of which are badly weathered. Gargoyles include lion heads, grylli, and a standing bird with spread wings. Grotesques include small human heads, grylli, a green man (south side) and foliate designs. Label stops depict images of ecclesiastics, lions and birds standing erect, many of which are modern.

Somerset

Beckington St George. Pevsner describes the west tower here as 'the most ambitious Norman tower of any Somerset parish church, big, broad, prominent, and vigorously decorated at the bell-stage' (1958a: 141). The church consists of a west tower, nave with wide north and south aisles, north porch, and a chancel with south chapel.

Sculpture

I. Corbels/Grotesques, exterior of west tower, 12th century.

I. Although these carvings are similar to Romanesque corbels none of them have a supporting function; in fact, they might be considered proto-gargoyles or grotesques. In particular, the carvings on the corners have much in common with late medieval grotesque imagery.

1) NE corner; monster head with open mouth.

2) N face; head and forelimbs of a horse with an open mouth.

3) NW corner; ram's head.

4) W face; cat head with flat ended snout, open mouth and teeth.

5) SW corner; dragon-like monster with forelimbs, open mouth, pointed teeth, and small pointed ears.

6) S face; cat head with beard.

7) SE corner; dragon head with wide smile and rows of teeth. Small forelimbs grip the stone.

Brent Knoll St Michael. Late medieval church built from blue lias and North Somerset freestone situated on the lower slopes of Brent Knoll. The church has a west tower with higher stair turret on the northeast corner, nave with north aisle, south transept, south porch, and chancel (Page and Wingate, n.d.).

Sculpture

I.   Gargoyles and grotesques, exterior of tower, late 14th century.

II.   Bench ends, nave, 15th century.

I. The tower possesses an ornate parapet pierced with quatrefoils in lozenges, with pinnacles rising from each corner. Eleven distinctive gargoyles and grotesques occur beneath the parapet.

A. East face, north to south;

1. Head with bulbous eyes below pronounced brows, a distorted nose and grimacing mouth. Slender twists of hair sprout upward from the top of the head.

2. Beast headed exhibitionist figure with disproportionately large head. The head, which has huge upright animal ears, bulging eyes and shaggy, mane-like hair that grows down its back, appears through the 'V' made by the two upturned human legs, between which testicles and an anus are clearly visible. Out of the wide open mouth of the head a worm-like creature with pointed ears and an open mouth appears, extending its tongue to lick the testes (compare with the figure at Mere, Wiltshire).

3. Head of a beast with shaggy hair, prominent eyes, open mouth and tongue extended over the chin.

4. SE corner, angled to face out at 45°: a rectangular beast head with pointed ears, an oval shaped mouth lined with teeth, and prominent eyes.

B. South face, east to west;

1. Head and forelimbs of a horned goat with striated body and open mouth.

2. Hybrid beast mouth-puller with large head, small, membranous wings on the shoulders, bulging eyes beneath prominent eyebrow ridges, and animal ears on the top corners of the head. The forelimbs are spindly and end in paw-like hands, each pulling apart the corners of the mouth. Big vertical lines on the neck.

3. SW corner of tower, angled to face out at forty-five degrees: hybrid human/animal mouth-puller very similar to the above. The figure has a long snout, eyes that project out from the head on stalks, a lumpy forehead (probably hair), erect animal ears on the top corners of the head, membranous wings joined to the shoulders, human arms and hands that pull open the corners of its oval-shaped mouth. The figure appears to be clothed in a long-sleeved tunic.

C. West face, south to north;

1. Head and foreparts of a beast with wide open mouth lined with teeth, prominent eyes, small ears, and forelimbs that terminate in three-toes.

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2. A beast devouring a human figure head first. The human figure is visible from the lower back down, and appears to be male. The anus is clearly carved. The beast head is carved in similar detail, with striated cheeks, bulging, drilled eyes, spiral tufts of upward pointing hair on the top of the head, teeth lining the oval mouth, and membranous wings joined at the shoulders. Compare with the wall-plate carving at Amesbury (Wiltshire).

3. NW corner: head and spiny forelimbs of a beast with open mouth lined with teeth. The overall style is plainer than the rest of the series.

D. North face:

1. Head and forelimbs of a beast exemplifying the series: bulging eyes, tufts of hair on the top of the head, small ears, membranous wings, spindly forelimbs with talons, and an open mouth lined with teeth.

II.

Brent Knoll is justifiably famous for its late medieval carved bench ends in the nave, in particular the sequence of three that feature Reynard the fox, a satirical figure popular in medieval folk tales. The first in this sequence depicts the mitred and robed Reynard preaching to the animals and birds in the woodland, while in a panel below this main picture two apes spit roast the carcass of a pig. The second bench-end is also divided into two panels, but here the lower one is well over two-thirds of the size of the upper. The latter depicts Reynard seated, his legs bound together, beneath the bent branch of a tree. In the tree are several geese and a human figure with a book or scroll. The lower panel shows Reynard with his legs in the stocks while a figure stands guard. This is the "trial" of Reynard. The final bench-end is again divided into two similar-sized panels, the upper one showing the hanging of Reynard by the geese, the lower one depicting two dogs watching (Page, nd; see also Varty, 1967).

Camerton St Peter. Of late medieval date are the west tower, north wall of the nave and the north porch. The rest of the church fabric represents post-medieval building (Pevsner 1958a: 150-151).

Sculpture

    I.   Label stops and grotesques, exterior of west tower, 15th/16th century.

I.

A. North side of west tower:

1) Highest arch, E side; damaged hybrid beast.

2) Highest arch, W side; quadruped with grinning human face, wide open mouth, rows of teeth, and a tongue extended over the lower lip.

3) Middle arch, E side; head and shoulders of a beast with a mouth full of sharp teeth and forelimbs reminiscent of a lion.

4) Middle arch, W side; human demi-figure holding a cylindrical object.

5) Lowest arch, E side; head of an elephant

6) Lowest arch, W side; head of a rhinoceros. These two carvings (A5, A6) appear to be post-medieval carvings (the style, stone and subject matter differ from the rest of the series).

B. West side of west tower:

1) Highest arch, N side; (a) Crouching quadruped beast with its mouth open and tongue out. Directly above this, on the string course below the crenellated parapet, there appears a (b) grinning horned head.

2) Highest arch, S side; (a) crouching quadruped beast, above which, on the string course, is a (b) grinning beast head.

3) Middle arch, N side; dog with a wide grin.

4) Middle arch, S side; crouching monster with a ridged spine and grinning tooth-filled mouth.

5) Lowest arch, N side; 11) demi-figure with a head of thick hair and who holds a string of rosary beads in the left hand.

6) Lowest arch, S side; human figure playing a lute.

C. South side of west tower:

1) String course directly above the highest window, one carving; the head and forepaws of a dog.

2) Label stop to the mid-level window, W side; human demi-figure cradling a small package.

3) Label stop to the mid-level window, E side; inverted quadruped with human face, wide grin and large teeth.

D. East side of west tower:

1) String-course below parapet, S side; mouth-pulling head set upon the back of an inverted beast's body (the hind legs appear to come out of the top of the head).

2) String-course below parapet, N side; damaged beast head with a similar body arrangement to its neighbour. The mouth is missing but big animal ears are visible.

3) Label stops to the highest window (directly below D1 and D2); two simple human heads. Lack of weathering suggests that these may be post-medieval pieces.

The basis for many of the carvings here is the body of the quadruped (e.g. B1a, B2a, B3). This is always carved so that the body is crouched and facing downwards. Numerous variations upon this model exist – monstrous (B4), human headed (A2, C3), and, at its most extreme, with human heads angled back so far, they appear to be attached to the back of the body of the animal (D1, D2).

This characteristic shape – the body of a crouched quadruped (often hybrid) with its head set back on its body so that the chest sticks out to an unnatural degree is common in the area (see Wright, 1982).

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Combe St Nicholas St Nicholas. The first church at Combe was founded in 970. This building was superceded by a Norman construction around 1170 and in the first half of the thirteenth century the church was rebuilt again. However, the church in its present form dates largely to the fifteenth century and consists of a nave with north and south aisles, west tower, chancel and north and south porches.

Sculpture

     I.   Capital, interior of nave, 12th century.

     II.   Gargoyles and grotesques, north and south sides of chancel and stair turrets, 15th century.

     III.   Gargoyles and grotesques, west tower 15th century.

I. The remaining capital from the later 12th century church appears on the north side of the nave, incorporated into the 15th century north arcade. The carving represents a Green beast head, emitting slender foliage from the mouth.

II. Two small octagonal towers – stair turrets – are attached to the north and south sides of the chancel. Carvings occur on the four angles most visible from the ground. North side of chancel, east to west;

1) Bearded and grimacing human head.
2) Human head, plainly carved.
3) Crowned human head.
4) Hybrid creature formed from the head of human with bulbous eyes and open mouth, and a beard of feathers which morph into the torso of a bird. There are two small bird feet.

South side of the chancel, east to west;

1) The head of a woman with long hair.
2) Quadruped, the lower half of the carving damaged.
3) Missing.
4) Male head wearing a headdress.

A carving of a hybrid bird/lion, possibly a griffin, occurs on the SE corner of what is now the vestry. On the corresponding corner on the north side of the chancel (NE) is a carving of an ape-like creature with forelimbs.

III.

1) NE corner; heavily eroded mouth-puller with figures. A central beast head with leonine forelimbs and tufts of hair and animal ears on the top of the head, is flanked by two leonine/serpentine creatures, each of which pulls one side of the mouth open.

2) SE corner; contorted human face with pointed nose. Two legs come out of the side of the head, each with a talon-like foot.

3) SW corner; leonine hybrid with membranous wings.

4) NW corner; hybrid creature with membranous wings and horns on the top of the head that curve backwards.

Englishcombe St Peter. Originally a Norman parish church composed of nave, axial tower, and chancel (similar to Studland and Lullington). In the later medieval period a chapel was added to the south side of the nave (Pevsner, 1958a: 189-190).

Sculpture

I.   Capitals, interior of central tower, 12th century.

II.   Corbels, exterior north and south sides of chancel, 12th century.

I. On the inside of the north wall of the tower are the remains of a blind arcade of two bays. The central capital (1) is carved with a humanoid head with pointed animal ears on the corners and deep lines surrounding the mouth and incised on the forehead. Out of the corners of the wide mouth appear the ends of a stick. The head has short spiky hair. The other carving (2) is on the north side of the chancel arch and is similar in theme and execution, although here a line of teeth is clearly visible at the base of the capital.

II. Ten corbels on both the north and south sides of the chancel. Only three corbels on the north side are carved; the rest are plain or modern replacements. All ten corbels on the south side, however, look original.

A. North side of chancel, east to west:

1) Plain.

2) Partially damaged human mouth-puller head with paw-like hands (Fig. 7. 10).

3) Plain.

4) Human head with pointed animal ears on the top corners and a long beard that grows from the chin. A claw-like hand supports the head.

5) Plain.

6) Missing.

7) Plain.

8) Plain.

9) Damaged beast head.

10) Plain.

B. South side of chancel, west to east:

1) Damaged.

2) Damaged.

3) Partially damaged beast head.

4) Human head with staring eyes, lined forehead, hairy face and slightly open mouth.

5) Cat head with wide open mouth.

6) Figure on the back of a quadruped, reaching over the top of its head to pull open the mouth by the upper jaw (Fig. 7. 1a).

7) Human head with staring eyes, forked goatee beard and lined forehead.

8) Animal head (equine?) with open mouth and extended tongue. Some damage to the to of the corbel.

9) Human head with geometric nose, sleepy eyes and lined forehead.

10) Muzzled bear head with open mouth and protruding tongue.

Fiddington St Martin. Rural church composed of a chancel with north vestry, nave with north aisle and south porch, and a west tower. Although the restoration in 1860 intended to rebuild all but the fifteenth-century west tower, pre-nineteenth-century material survives – the chancel arch is fourteenth century, and the roofs probably date to the sixteenth century. Indeed, the south walls of the nave and chancel 'appear to be medieval and include an area of possible herringbone masonry' (Dunning, Siraut and Baggs, 1992a: 103). Herringbone masonry, characteristic of early medieval and Romanesque building work is, however, unlikely; the first record of the church is not until 1272 and on close inspection the masonry in the wall appears to be more a random coincidence of angled stones than an intended pattern. This does not mitigate its medieval status but rather suggests that parts of the wall may date to the later medieval period instead of the earlier.

Sculpture

I. Carved quoinstone, SE corner of S aisle, uncertain date.

I. The figure carved in low relief on red sandstone is that of a Sheela-na-gig (Fig. 9. 14). Large oval animal ears appear on each side of the round head (omitted from the drawing in Aston, 1978-9: 112), the figure's right ear slightly higher than the left. The left arm is raised, the right is bent at the elbow, the hand resting upon the inside thigh of the right leg. Both legs are bent at right angles, each foot facing away from the other. The genital area is badly damaged. The style of animal ears suggests a mid- to later medieval date for the carving, which may mean that the figure is in situ.

Halse St James. Village church built from local sandstone and Ham stone. There is a chancel with north chapel, nave with north aisle and south porch, and a west tower. Traces of its Norman past are evident in the rear arch of the south door, the font, and a carved stone beneath the east window; these date to the twelfth century. The rest of the church appears to be late medieval, and the north aisle was built in 1546. In 1900 a thorough restoration began (Pevsner, 1958b: 187-188; Dunning, 1985: 80).

Sculpture

I.   Capitals, north arcade of nave, 15th century.

II.   Roundel and quatrefoil, south side of south arcade, reset, possibly of 13th century origin.

I. Three bay north arcade with moulded piers and carved capital bands. The capitals to the two columns are carved with fluid wave-like patterns; the two responds are each carved with a Green Man.

1) Easternmost respond; head with open mouth and protruding tongue. From the corners of the mouth sprout thin featherlike stems that fill the north and south sides of the capital.

2) Westernmost respond; head and foliage carved in a similar style to I1, except here the foliage appears to grow out of the top of the head, just above the nose. The mouth is closed. The feathery stems are curved and hung with berries.

These carved capital bands have much in common with those in the churches at Upwey (Dorset), Stogumber (Somerset), and Ottery St Mary (Devon), all of which date to the late medieval period and depict Green Man heads. However, what makes the carvings here exceptional is their style – they are reminiscent of Romanesque work in their boldly carved, fluid lines. This "early" look to the carvings is a puzzle, especially with the moulded columns beneath. However, their architectural context (the north aisle) is unquestionably fifteenth century (square headed external windows, chamfered arches). Unless these are reused pieces then they too must be of a similar date. That the subject matter is common to capitals of similar late medieval date in the vicinity suggests that the carvings here are in situ.

II. South arcade of three bays: on the south side of the arcade, in the spandrels of the arches and almost immediately above each column are two inset carved pieces of stone which are not whitewashed like the rest of the arcade. The furthest east is a roundel carved with a profusely foliate Green Man head. The style of carving suggests Early English work. That over the westernmost column is a quatrefoil.

The oddity in both subject (a detailed Green Man and a simple quatrefoil) and context suggest that they have been placed here in the post-medieval period, possibly taken from elsewhere. A roundel set into the wall above the tower arch at the west end of the nave carries the initials WH TB CW arranged in a column and the date 1758. This might suggest a similar date for the placing of the other two pieces.

Lullington All Saints. Norman church little altered from its linear plan of chancel, axial tower and nave (compare with Studland, Dorset). There is a large south chapel and a south porch adjoining the nave (Clerk, 1851: 86-92; Pevsner, 1958a: 222-223).

Sculpture

I.   Capitals, chancel arch, late 11th century.

II.   Corbels, exterior of north side of the nave, late 11th century.

III.   Exterior of north door (tympanum, voussoirs, capitals, roundels, inset figure), late 11th century.

IV.   Other carvings: A) font, 11th century; B) grotesques and label stops on the tower, 15th century; C) carvings in the south transept, 13th century.

I. Plain Romanesque chancel arch of three orders, terminating in two clusters of capitals. The outer arch is flush with the wall and carved with chevrons. All capitals are crowned with thick plain abaci, apart from the most central ones which support abaci bearing repetitive leaf motifs.

North side, north to south:

1)   Two confronted Siren-like beings, their heads meeting on the corner of the capital (Fig. 8. 3). Both are near identical. Each has an oversized human head with a long plait trailing horizontally from its top, a pair of large upward pointing feathered wings (similar to those sported by the Sirens around the wheel window at the east end of the chancel at Barfreston, Kent, and the Griffin voussoir set

into the west wall of the church at Binstead on the Isle of Wight), two tiny forelimbs and a twisted, beaded, serpentine tail that coils upward. (Similar tails feature on the two confronted wyverns on the opposite capital).

2) Feline head placed on the corner of the capital and disgorging a single thick stem that branches into several stalks, each terminated by a half-closed leaf. The column supporting this capital is carved to give a spiralling effect.

3) Scallop capital with leaf patterns (5 long leaves each) on the abacus.

South side, north to south:

4) As no. 3 above, but with more and smaller leaf motifs (3 leaves each).

5) Bicorporate lion, the head looking directly out from the corner of the capital, each body to either side and both featuring tails that end in a leafy tip similar to the leaves on capital no. 2. Supported by a column carved with a spiralling design.

6) Two confronted bird-like wyverns with scaly tails that rise upward. Each appears to bite the other's neck.

II. Thirteen corbels, east to west:

1) Two grimacing human figures embracing.

2) A crowned male head with partially damaged face, the nose missing. A full beard hangs in curls.

3) Cat head with five bird-like serpents in its mouth, their heads spilling out across the corbel (Fig. 6. 2b).

4) Damaged head.

5) Bird head with something in its mouth.

6) A large wyvern with feathered wings and looped centrally beaded tail holding a vertically positioned lion in its forelimbs. The dragon appears to bite the lion's head.

7) This corbel is very eroded, but enough remains to suggest that it was carved with a backward leaning dancer or tumbler figure.

8) Damaged. Possibly a leonine beast.

9) Damaged.

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10) Faint outline of a figure with spread legs and outstretched arms – a possible Sheela-na-gig? Reminiscent of the figure on the font at Winterbourne Monkton, Wiltshire (12th century).

11) Bearded head with staring eyes.

12) Ram's head with curly horns.

13) Winged beast head, the feathered wings sprouting from each side of the head.

III. North door featuring a number of carved details.

Arch of two orders, the innermost carved with thick zigzags, the outer featuring a continuous series of irregular beakheads.

Tympanum: two confronted beasts (lion and a griffin) either side of a Tree of Life (Fig. 5. 3). Both animals eat the foliage. Around the semicircular edge appear a series of nine circles with a wavy square shape within each. Two of these are also placed at the foot of the door, one on each side.

Capitals: Two on each side of the door. From east to west these are:

1) Faintly carved scallop design.

2) On the north face of the capital there is a figure with long straight hair and wearing a long tunic sat on the back of a lion. The figure reaches over the top of the lion's head to pull open the mouth. A bird on the west face of the capital attacks the lion, pecking at its head.

3) Two confronted quadruped leonine beasts.

4) A centaur with a bow firing an arrow at the confronted beasts on the neighbouring capital.

The entire arch is enclosed by a large pointed arch that springs from the same place as the semicircular one, the tip of which terminates at the corbel-table. In the space between the top of the semicircular arch and the tip of the pointed one there is a rectangular niche with a rounded arch top, inside of which is placed a figure of a seated and nimbed Christ with one arm (his right) raised in blessing. Two beaded roundels are placed on each side of the niche. At the apex and termination points of this arch are placed very weathered carved heads. The easternmost one has a hole drilled in the forehead.

IV. Other carvings.

A) Inside the nave there is a Romanesque font carved with a series of beast and human heads at the rim, some of which disgorge stylised foliage. Immediately below these is an inscription which reads 'Hoc fontis sacro pereunt delicta lavacro' (In this holy font sins perish and are washed away). Below the inscription is a band of flower designs, and the lowest level features interlinked blind arcading. The font dates to the late eleventh century.

B) The upper stages of the tower were reconstructed in the fifteenth century. Formulaic grotesques of vertically positioned (heads downward) quadruped beasts, two on each face, are set into the string course below the parapet. Immediately below each pair is a window with a hoodmould and label stops carved with similar beasts or simple human heads.

C) The south chapel was added in the later thirteenth century. There are sturdy stiff-leaf capitals and label stops to the entrance arch (from the nave), and with the east and south windows label stops carved with the heads of men and women.

Milborne Port St John the Evangelist. Built of rubble and ashlar the church is composed of a chancel with north vestry and chapel, central tower with north and south transepts, and a nave with north aisle. The chancel, crossing and parts of the south transept survive from a pre-Conquest cruciform church whose north transept and originally unaisled nave were destroyed in 1867. To the twelfth century date the mid stage of the tower and south doorway with carved tympanum; the south porch and gabled wall of the south transept are fourteenth-century, while the top of the tower is of fifteenth century date. The nave was completely rebuilt between 1867 and 1869 (Dunning, Siraut and Baggs, 1999b: 154; Wood, 1997).

Sculpture

I.   Capitals and tympanum, exterior of south door, 12th century.

II.   Capitals, interior of crossing tower, 12th century.

III.   Other carvings: gargoyles, corners of the tower, 15th century.

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I. Romanesque doorway of two orders, although much altered in 1843 when it was heightened and provided with an outer order and a small structure to protect it from the weather. The tympanum is carved with two confronted lions, the westernmost one turning the head backwards to bite at its own tail which extends upwards between the rear legs, while the easternmost lion extends a foliate tongue. A semicircular band of foliage frames the two beasts. The capitals supporting the outer order date to the nineteenth century, and are copies of Romanesque stylised foliage. The two capitals supporting the inner order are original and are carved with 1) a feline mask disgorging broad leaves (west capital, south face); 2) a foliage design (west capital, east face); 3) a human figure wearing a knee-length tunic belted at the waist and wielding a sword and holding a shield (east capital, west face); and 4) a griffin in profile (east capital, south face). The abacus above the capitals is carved with billet ornament and dates to the nineteenth century.

II. All four original piers of the tower arches survive together with the Romanesque north and south arches. The Romanesque arches feature the same broad roll mould that appears around the tympanum on the south door. The arches at the east and west were replaced in the fourteenth century with pointed ones. According to the church guide the capitals of the west arch and the west part of the north arch are stone, while the remainder are of plaster. The designs on all follow a common theme; big flat plant stems and interlinking leaf motifs. On the south side of the crossing one of the capitals features a feline mask with foliage entering and leaving through the ears and mouth.

III. All four gargoyles on each corner of the tower appear to follow the standard late medieval formula in this area for exterior tower carvings – all are hybrid leonine beasts with bat wings. These are placed upon the string-course below the crenellated parapet.

Priston St Luke. The church consists of a Norman nave with south porch, central tower and chancel. The tower dates to 1751; the chancel is nineteenth century (Pevsner, 1958a: 247).

Sculpture

I. Corbels, exterior south side of the nave, 12th century.

I. West to east:
1) Horned human head with open mouth.
2) Female head with twin-peaked head-dress and open mouth.
3) Damaged human head.
4) Beast head with huge eyes and contorted snout.
5) Plain human head with large eyes and contorted mouth. There is a line around the top of the forehead which might suggest some kind of cap.
6) Plain, simple human head.
7) As above.
8) Horned animal head.
9) Grimacing beast head.
10) Human head with large eyes and possible cap or hat.
11) Beast head with wide open mouth and pointed ears on the corners of the head.
12) Human head with pointed animal ears on the corners of the head.
13) Eroded beast head.

The distinguishing feature of this series of carvings is not to be found in the style or subject matter but in the placement of imagery. There are three 'pairs' of carvings: numbers 1 and 2, 4 and 5, and 11 and 12. In each pair the carvings share a number of similarities and one glaring difference. For example, number 1 represents a devilish horned human head with its mouth open; its partner, number 2 also has an open mouth and horns on the head, but they are the 'horns' made by an elaborate head-dress. The next two pairs, like many hybrid architectural carvings, suggest that "human" and "animal" are indistinct categories. Carving number four represents the head of a beast with large eyes and a contorted snout, while number five differs only

in that it is the head of a human. In a similar manner number 11 shows a beast head with pointed ears and number 12 a human head with pointed ears on the angle of the head.

Queen Camel St Barnabas. The church consists of a clerestoried nave with north and south aisles, chancel, western tower and vestry. The standing fabric is no earlier than the thirteenth century, although there has been an earlier church on the site. By the later medieval period the living of the church belonged to Cleeve Abbey.

Sculpture

I.   Roof bosses, chancel, 15th century.

I. Thirty-five wooden bosses (five beams running west/east, each bearing seven bosses) appear in the roof of the chancel.

Beam A (furthest north), west to east:

1) Foliage.
2) Vine with fruit.
3) Merman; in his right hand he holds his long beard, in his left hand he holds his tail.
4) A ship with two sailors beneath which, in the water, appears a large fish or whale.
5) Phoenix in the fire.
6) Oak foliage.
7) Foliage.

Beam B, west to east:

1) Foliage.
2) Camel with two humps and a tail that curves up between the rear legs to sprout into foliage. The front legs also go into foliage.
3) Figure on horseback. The rider wears a tunic belted at the waist and has spurs on the heels.

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6) Oak foliage.
7) Foliage.

Beam B, west to east:

1) Foliage.
2) Camel with two humps and a tail that curves up between the rear legs to sprout into foliage. The front legs also go into foliage.
3) Figure on horseback. The rider wears a tunic belted at the waist and has spurs on the heels.

4) Mermaid with long straight hair that flows down to her waist. In her right hand she holds a mirror, with her left hand she combs her hair. Below the waist her fish tail is formed from spines and scales of differing sizes. Two large feathered wings attach behind her shoulders and fill the space of the rest of the boss (Fig. 8. 11a).

5) Dragon next to a tree in which there are doves.

6) Foliage.

7) Amphisbaena with scaled body.

Beam C, west to east:

1) Foliage.

2) Foliage.

3) Foliage.

4) Angel.

5) Quadruped in foliage.

6) Griffin in profile, surrounded by foliage.

7) Vine and grapes.

Beam D, west to east:

1) Foliage.

2) Foliage.

3) Lion in foliage.

4) Stag in foliage.

5) Quadruped – the guidebook suggests a mantichore.

6) Sheep in foliage.

7) Dragon.

Beam E, west to east:

1) Ivy.

2) Pelican in her piety.

3) Foliage.

4) Elephant with castle upon its back.

5) Antelope.

6) Unicorn with a figure.

7) Eagle.

The responsibility of the chancel area belonging to Cleeve Abbey by this date is reflected in the similarity of the chancel roof to that over the hall at Cleeve (Buckle, 1890: 44). Such an ecclesiastical benefactor helps to explain the strong influence of a bestiary manuscript in the selection of the designs (see Druce, 1937).

Stogursey St Andrew. With the exception of Dunster, St Andrew's is the largest parish church in West Somerset. Today it consists of a sanctuary with north vestry, choir with north and south aisles, a crossing tower with north and south transepts, and a nave with north porch. The building discloses an interesting history. An alien priory serving the cell of a larger Benedictine house (the Abbey of Lonlay in Normandy) it was suppressed with other alien priories in 1414. As well as being monastic until this date it was also parochial, serving as the church for the parish.

William de Falaise and his wife Geva presented the Church of St Andrew together with numerous tithes and forestry rights to the Abbey of Lonlay (founded in 1026) sometime between 1100 and 1107. If the building was complete at the time of its presentation then the oldest parts are no later than 1107. These include the crossing, the transepts and most of the tower, which on stylistic grounds are generally agreed to be of late eleventh century date. The east end of the chancel and transepts each terminated in an apse.

By about 1120 monks from Lonlay had established a priory at Stogursey. Around 1175 the limited space of the chancel was extended eastwards to form a choir which the monks could use for their offices separate from the parishioner's space in the nave. The three apses were demolished to form a choir flanked by two side aisles, the

apses being replaced by the arches either side of the choir. The chancel aisles were restored in the fifteenth century, the north one complete with crenellations.

The building underwent a 'drastic and disastrous 'restoration' in 1865' (Eeles, 1941: 7), many aspects of which were removed in the mid twentieth century (e.g the large stone pulpit at the entrance to the choir) (Greswell, 1897; Eeles, 1941: 7-10; Pevsner, 1958b: 299-301; Baylé, 1980; Ballard, 1992; Dunning, Siraut and Baggs, 1992b: 155-156).

Sculpture

I. Capitals, crossing tower, late eleventh century.

I. Eight carved capitals, four of which include figurative carvings.

1) SE cluster, west face; two pairs of confronted wyverns above sprigs of stylized foliage. Their heads meet on the NW and SW corners of the capital (indeed, they might be bicorporate). Each has two legs and an upright wing (compare with the winged serpent carved on one of the crossing capitals at Alton [HANTS01ID2], also the griffin at Binstead [HANTS03I1]). In the centre of the west face of the capital the two tails of the wyverns join and wind round each other. The tails of the creatures on the north and south sides of the capital sprout into foliage. There are volutes on the NW and SW corners of the capital.

2) NE cluster, south face; two pairs of confronted wyverns. The image is almost exactly the same as number 1, though carved in a darker limestone and with much less detail. The wings of the creatures on the south face are back to front. It has been suggested that this is post-medieval work (Baylé, 1980).

3) NE cluster, west face; in the centre of the west face of the capital is a stylised Tree of Life with spiral branches, on either side of which appear two pairs of confronted beasts, their heads meeting on the NW and SW corners of the capital (Fig. 5. 2). The NW pair include (north face) a horse-like animal with its head turned over its right shoulder to greet the onlooker face on. Its partner is an upright quadruped with a long arching neck and twisted back head from whose mouth spills a long tongue that rests on the back of the beast. The SW pair

include a (south face) lion-like horse. The southern part of the west face of the capital is too badly damaged to decipher. A row of spirals occur at the base of the design, above the cable work that joins onto the column.

4) NW cluster, east face; a Green Man with scrolling leaves creeping out of the corners of the mouth (Fig. 5. 13).. His tongue is extended. The two volutes on the top of the capital also extend from the mouth of the head. There is abstract foliage beneath the face.

Richard Ballard notes that the capitals bear many similarities to those at Durham (c1072) and Canterbury (c1075), suggesting a similar date for Stogursey. Baylé (1980) considers them to be surprising both by their links with Norman art and by their originality, representing a unique example of a remarkably heterogenous mixture of Norman and Saxon components. Six capitals are in a pale limestone (as yet unidentified), but the two on the chancel arch are in Ham stone (a darker limestone). The widespread use of this material in the last century and the treatment of the surface suggests that these are later substitutes, probably during the Victorian restoration. Baylé suggests that the six pale limestone capitals are from the same workshop, and dates them to the last decade of the eleventh century or certainly before 1106, that is, by the time the grant to Lonlay was made (Ballard, 1992: 7).

Stoke-sub-Hamdon (East Stoke) St Mary the Virgin. Rural church built from Ham stone. The nave and chancel are Norman, the latter possibly once apsidal ended. At the beginning of the thirteenth century the base of the north tower which forms a stone-vaulted north transept was built. At the end of the same century the south transept was added. Towards the end of the medieval period the walls of the nave and south transept were raised in height and roofs of shallower pitch constructed. The dedication of this church has shifted twice in modern times; in 1840 and 1859 it was said to be dedicated to St Denys, while between c1866 and 1891 St Andrew (Dunning, 1974: 247-248; Ashdown, 1993).

Sculpture

I. Tympanum, north door to nave, 12th century.

II. Carved head to Romanesque window, north side of nave, 12th century.

III. Corbels, north and south sides of the chancel, 12th century.

IV. Gargoyles, south transept, 13th century.

V. Gargoyle, south side of nave, 15th century.

VI. Gargoyles, corners of the tower, 15th century.

I. Above the north door to the nave is a carved tympanum carved with a Tree of Life with three birds among its branches, on either side of which appear two beasts (Fig. 5. 22). These are: on the viewer's left, a centaur firing an arrow, to the side of which there is an inscription that reads SAGITARIUS; to the viewer's right a quadruped with ovoid ears on the top of its head and a stylized mane, beneath which appears the inscription LEO. Above the lion there is an Agnus Dei.

II. On both north and south sides of the nave there are thin windows with carved arch-heads. The window head on the south side of the nave is carved with geometric designs, while that on the north side of the nave presents a scene in which a wyvern with a long tail and two small wings is twisting round to face its human attacker, who stands upon its tail and attacks it with a spear and a sword.

III. The corbel-table beneath the eaves of the chancel dates to the 12th century. The images are as follows:

A. North side, east to west;

1) Cable ornament.

2) Smiling demi-figure holding two cone-shaped items, the pointed ends of which rest against either side of the chin.

3) Sheela-na-gig. Squatting figure with large ovoid head whose arms reach behind her legs to rest upon her buttocks, either side of the exposed genitals (Fig. 9. 10).

4) Cylinder, thinner in the middle than at the ends.

5) Geometric design featuring layers of increasingly smaller squares.

6) Quadruped. The weathering has made any identification difficult.

7) Plain.

B. South side, west to east;

1) Cable decoration.

2) Angular geometric design.

3) Geometric design based upon intersecting cylinders.

4) Geometric design featuring layers of increasingly smaller squares.

5) Two beasts, a quadruped with large ears (face on) and a bird (on one side).

6) Lozenge design.

7) Geometric design based upon intersecting cylinders.

IV. On the east and west faces of the south transept appear two gargoyles, each of which has a lead drainpipe protruding from the mouth. Both appear to be human heads with prominent brows, large eyes, and shaggy hair. The head on the east face (2) features two hands that pull open the sides of the mouth.

V. The south side of the nave features a former gargoyle carved as a female exhibitionist figure (Fig. 9. 15). The figure is damaged, missing her right leg and right arm from the forearm to the shoulder. Her mouth is open wide as if screaming and a stone is lodged inside it, suggesting former use as a waterspout. Joined to the side of the church along one side of her body (viewer's right) she is naked and possesses a pair of pendulous breasts. Her left hand rests upon her body at the top of the genitals; her right hand holds the side of the head (Ashdown, 1993: 72-3).

VI. The tower possesses four gargoyles projecting out from each corner:

1) SW corner; seated leonine creature with open mouth, flowing mane and membranous wings joined at the shoulder.

2) NW corner; hybrid quadruped with veined membranous wings and a body covered in shaggy hair. The head has broken apart.

3) NE corner; hybrid quadruped with membranous wings and a body covered in shaggy hair.

4) SE corner; two human figures with long headgear clad in long-sleeved tunics on either side of the head of a beast pulling its mouth open by the corners. The beast has forelimbs, a shaggy body and crests of hair on the head (Fig. 6. 14g).

Wells Cathedral. The cathedral is mainly the work of two periods, c.1180-1240 and c.1290-1340. The site began early in the eighth century as a collegiate church before becoming the see of a Bishop in 909. There are no visible remains of the Saxon cathedral. In the twelfth century the east end, straight-ended chancel, crossing and tower, transepts, nave and west front were built. The second phase of building added a new east end with east transept and east Lady Chapel, as well as seeing the completion and strutting of the crossing tower.

Sculpture

I.   Capitals, nave, north and south transepts, choir, 13th century.

II.   Misericords, choir, mid-14th century.

I. A full description of the carved capitals can be found in Gardner 1956. Subjects include a bicorporate lion, foliate bird-like dragons, confronted beasts, foliate harpies (and other combinations of human and beast heads with bird bodies), a human head with animal ears, a mouth-puller, and grimacing heads.

Gardner states that in 'these little sculptures there is no definite religious of theological scheme such as exists in the more important carvings of the west front. Biblical figures like Moses, Aaron, and Elijah appear beside birds, beasts, dragons, caricatures, rural scenes, devils, a cobbler, and humorous incidents like the robbing of the vineyard. The sculptors seem to have been given a free hand, and to have been allowed full scope for their imagination' (1956: 11).

II. A full description of the misericords is available in Remnant 1969: 136-138 (see also Figs 8. 8b-c).

Wiltshire

Amesbury St Mary and St Melor. Founded as a Benedictine nunnery in 980. By 1177, however, the nunnery had been re-located nearby and the site was re-founded as a Priory of the Order of Fontevrault for men and women (although the female orientation of the house remained; see Pevsner, 1975: 89). From this time on the church was also used by the parish (Parker and Chandler, 1993: 145). Now dedicated to St Mary and St Melor the church consists of a nave, chancel, central tower, north and south transepts and a south aisle.

Sculpture

I.   Corbels, exterior of north and south sides of nave, 11th century.

II.   Corbels, interior of nave, 15th century.

III.   Roof bosses, south aisle, south transept, 15th century.

IV.   Wall-plate carvings, south aisle, north and south transepts, 15th century.

I. The series is highly weathered and as such difficult to decipher. The carvings on the south side of the nave are also partially concealed by the roof of the 15th century south aisle.

II.

A. South side of nave, west to east:

1) Hooded head with pointed animal ears.

2) Head with long thick hair.

3) Crowned head.

4) Angel bearing a shield.

5) Mitred head.

6) Demi-figure of a man with a full beard and wearing a hood. Large animal ears protrude from the sides of his head.

B. North side of nave, east to west:

1) Horizontal demifigure, possibly of an angel with hands held in prayer.

2) Head wearing a wide-brimmed hat.

3) Angel bearing a shield.

4) Female centaur and a human figure.

5) Head with a thick beard on the chin and hair swept back.

6) Obscured by scaffolding.

III.

Foliate roof bosses are not recorded.

South nave aisle

1) Head with open mouth, prominent teeth and large tongue extended over the chin (Fig. 6. 11a).

2) Two heads confronted.

3) Head with open mouth and prominent teeth, laughing heartily.

4) Head of a woman wearing a headdress.

5) Head of a lion with protruding tongure.

6) Head with long hair, head-dress and asymmetrical eyes.

South transept

7) Head with thick curly beard and hair, with a bone between the teeth (Fig. 6. 1a).

8) Head with protruding tongue.

9) Head with thick wavy hair and beard, and full cheeks.

IV. Carved wooden images that spring from the wall-plate beam; somewhere between a roof boss and a corbel. The ones in the south aisle, like the bosses there, are painted.

South aisle

1) Demifigure of a male. He wears a striped robe and a turban-style cap. A long, wavy beard grows from his chin. His eyes are closed and his mouth slightly open.

2) Demifigure bearing a heraldic shield. He has short, thick hair that sticks out from his head.

3) Demifigure of a man with the tonsured haircut of a monk. Wears a padded jacket and a sad expression.

4) Demifigure bearing a scroll which reads "Alleluia" (a post-medieval addition). Her hair hangs in thick braids down the sides of her face and is fastened behind her head.

5) Demifigure bearing a shield, similar to no.2 in this series.

6) Demifigure of a woman wearing a loose-fitting dress. Her hands are raised in front of her chest. Braided hair hangs over her ears. She has a sorrowful face.

7) Demifigure bearing a shield, the lower part of which has been cut away. Her hair hangs in thick rolls over her ears. She too has a sorrowful expression.

South transept

8) Bust of a female head wearing a headdress and gorget.

9) Beast with huge mouth devouring a human figure head first (Fig. 6. 1b).

10) Crowned demifigure with short hair and hands beneath the chin.

11) Demifigure bearing a shield.

12) Smiling demifigure holding a two-headed bird by its outstretched wings.

13) Demifigure bearing an ornate crown.

North transept

14) -23) Angels bearing shields.

In the nave there is one wall-plate carving of a human head that is very goat-like in its appearance. Otherwise the figures are fairly standard carvings of secular men and women. Sheridan and Ross illustrate number 9 in this series (1975: 30). The two-headed bird motif (12) may also be found as a roof boss in the cloisters at Lacock Abbey, Wiltshire, and on glazed tiles at Cleeve Abbey and Glastonbury Abbey (Somerset), and Fountains Abbey (Yorkshire) (Eames, 1980: Cat. Nos. 1728-1733). The museum at Glastonbury Abbey suggests that this is a heraldic motif connected to the family of Richard II.

Bishop's Cannings St Mary the Virgin. Large cruciform church consisting of a nave with north and south aisles, south porch, north and south transepts, crossing, chancel, sacristy and south chapel. Although originally built in the late twelfth century, much of the visible fabric today dates to the thirteenth-century. The spire and stair turret on the crossing tower are fifteenth century (Powell and Tillot, 1953: 104-105; Pevsner, 1975: 111-114; Annable, 1991).

Sculpture

I.   Corbels, exterior of tower, early 13th century.

II.   Roof bosses, interior of crossing, early 13th century.

I.

A. South side, west to east:

1) Grimacing head with lined face.

2) Head and shoulders of a figure wearing some sort of head-dress or crown. Like a number of other carvings in this series the figure emerges out of a roll-mould rather than fit into the curve of a conventional corbel (see also 7, 11, 12, 16, 20; and see 13-15 for examples of non-figurative pieces).

3) Grimacing head with large almond-shaped eyes.

4) Relatively small and fairly expressionless head.

5) Grimacing head wearing a mask.

6) Blank head with ridged cheeks.

7) Head set upon a grooved background.

8) Head with moustache and long straight hair.

9) Horizontal, grinning masked demi-figure.

10) Blank expressionless head with large eyes.

11) Grimacing head with a heavily ridged face upon a grooved architectural piece.

B. East side – no carved corbels.

C. North side, east to west:

1) Head and shoulders of a figure upon a background similar to number 2.

2) Plain corbel with a roll-mould below a horizontal groove.

3) As above.

4) As above.

5) Head and shoulders of a figure upon a grooved background.

6) Head with open mouth.

7) Head emerging out of a plain background.

8) Similar to C2.

9) Head emerging from a roll-mould piece.

10) Similar to C2

11) Masked grimacing head with incised face. Set upon a moulded background.

D. West Side, north to south:

1) Plain moulded piece.

2) Head and shoulders of a figure set upon a moulded architectural background.

3) As above but with a thinner figure.

4) Human head possibly wearing a mask; or a human/animal head.

5) Plain moulded piece.

6) Romanesque style head with big almond-shaped eyes.

7) A pair of human heads, the one furthest north appears to wear a horned head-dress; the head on the south side of the corbel is fairly plain.

8) Human head wearing an animal mask.

Romanesque influences are visible in many of these carvings – incised, ridged faces, heads with moustaches and long straight hair, and the paired-head corbel on the west side of the tower (many examples exist throughout the twelfth-century work at both Romsey and Winchester). Having said this, the series shows a marked tendency toward abstraction. The corbels on the tower at Milford-on-sea are similar. Few beast heads occur in either series; rather, the carvings accent the human head, usually represented in as simple a manner as possible. Another interesting feature of the Bishop's Cannings series is the incorporation of figure-work with architectural mouldings, although this is by no means an innovation (e.g. Romsey).

There appears to be a bias in the position of the carvings towards the south and west faces of the tower. On the south side all eleven corbels are carved into heads of various kinds. On the west side six out of the eight corbels are likewise carved. However, the east face of the tower has no figurative carvings, and on the north face only six of the eleven corbels are carved with heads, the rest being plain. Moreover, whereas the corbels on the south and west faces of the tower bear a diverse range of figurative representations (varying human heads, one pair of heads, a horizontal figure, and some masked images), the north face bears only two types of corbel – plain or a human head set upon a moulded background. This bias in the location of figurative carvings suggests that the corbels were deliberately placed to favour the south and west sides of the church. It is possible that these images were positioned thus in order to be seen or glimpsed by an audience, despite the height of the tower. In support of this the entrance to the church, via the south side of the nave, would have meant that the south and west sides of the tower were the sides most frequently viewed by people entering and leaving the building. This might be connected more with prestige than any didactic concerns: Bishop's Cannings, although part of the Bishop of Salisbury's estate, was, until the nineteenth century, exempt from the jurisdiction of the bishop in certain matters.

II. The vaulting forms two octagonal rings around the central opening into the upper stages of the tower. Eight bosses appear on each, while there are four additional bosses where the north-south and east-west ribs join the wall.

A. Outer octagon
1) (N) Two confronted Green birds. Their necks are entwined and profuse foliage spills from their beaks.
2) (NW) Foliage – four broad leaves grow from the sides of the boss to meet at the centre.
3) (W) A figure with a crooked staff. A small animal head is visible next to his left leg.
4) (SW) Female figure in a voluminous dress whose legs bend up past her waist. She grasps an ankle with each hand. It is difficult to avoid making the parallel

between this image and the motif of the two-tailed Mermaid who grasps her tails in each hand (for examples of this image on the continent see Weir and Jerman, 1986: figs 18a, 19a, plate 22; a more local example can be found in the 16th-century stalls at Christchurch Priory, see Fig. 8. 8e).

5) (S) Symmetrical flower and foliage design.

6) (SE) Female head wearing an elaborated twin-peaked head-dress. In between its two 'horns' and to one side of the face are demonic-looking grinning heads. (Similar images can be found at Devizes St Mary).

7) (E) Dragon with scaly body and large claws in which appear a human figure, upon whose head the beast is biting.

8) (NE) Tree/branch with large leaves.

B. Inner octagon

9) (N) Damaged.

10) (NW) Damaged.

11) (W) Dragon whose body swirls round to become foliage (cf. Lacock Abbey, east cloister).

12) (SW) Two confronted Griffins, one of whom holds a heart.

13) (S) Foliage.

14) (SE) Foliage.

15) (E) Wheel or star among foliage.

16) (NE) Damaged.

C. Bosses at end of north-south and east-west ribs

17) (N) Foliage.

18) (E) Bat.

19) (S) Human head with feathered wings.

20) (W) Foliage.

Broad Chalke All Saints. A '[b]ig, ashlar-faced church with transepts and a crossing tower' (Pevsner, 1975: 145). The work here mainly dates to two periods, the late thirteenth century and the mid-late fourteenth century. The late thirteenth-century work includes the north transept, west doorway and the chancel; that of the later fourteenth-century includes the nave and south transept. Certainly, by 1500 most of the nave had been rebuilt. The south porch dates to the early sixteenth century (*ibid.*, 145-146; Freeman, 1987; Trethowan, n. d.).

Sculpture

I.   Corbels, interior of tower crossing, 14th century.

II.   Corbels, interior of nave, 14th century.

III.   Gargoyles and grotesques, exterior north side of the nave, 14th century.

IV.   Grotesques, south porch, early 16th century.

V.   Gargoyles and grotesques, exterior of tower, early 16th century.

I. Four corbels, each one in a corner of the tower.

1) (NW) Grinning human head with animal ears and thick curly hair, huge almond-shaped eyes, well-defined eyebrows, wide nose and visible teeth.

2) (NE) Collection of animals – two dogs, a rabbit and a rodent.

3) (SE) Grinning head with curly hair, big lips, broad nose and protruding tongue. The shape of the head tapers to a pointed chin.

4) (SW) Bearded pig.

II.

A. North wall, west to east:

1) Angel holding throat with right hand.

2) Angel playing bagpipes.

3) Angel playing a pipe.

4) Staring head with an open mouth and protruding tongue. Possibly a modern replacement, for the style of carving is plain and the features sharp. Like its neighbour (B5) it is placed slightly higher than the rest of the sequence.

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5) Mouth-puller; head with arms that sprout from near its top and stretch down its sides to pull the mouth open.

B. South wall, east to west:
1) Angel praying.
2) Angel playing a fiddle.
3) Angel playing a harp.
4) Angel playing a stringed instrument.
5) Angel playing a form of keyed instrument.

III.
A. East to west:
1) Destroyed.
2) Small weathered human head.
3) Gargoyle with mouth opening into a drain.
4) Weathered beyond recognition.
5) As above.
6) Demifigure of a man.
7) Swan or goose.
8) Hybrid beast.
9) A bird holding a small animal by the tail, or is it a sprig of foliage?
10) Green Man, two large leaves extending either side of the mouth.
11) A fish.
12) Large weathered corbel. This is likely to be a reused piece.
13) Rabbit.
14) Winged head.
15) Foliage scroll.
16) Corbel similar to no. 12. It bears the image of a ram's head.

There is nothing particularly regular about the distribution of the images here, nor their style of carving – some are small sensitive representations of birds or animals while others are large gargoyles or corbel type heads. Quite possibly there is some

reuse of carved pieces. Numbers 3, 6, 12 and 16 are all big pieces of sculpture that break through the string course upon which the carvings occur, suggestive of later alterations. Some of the images are weathered to little more than sandstone lumps.

IV.

1) (Southwest corner) Full figure, one half of his body on the west face, the other half on the south face of the porch. He pulls his mouth open with his hands.
2) (Southeast corner) Human head whose tiny hands pull apart the corners of the mouth.

V. Beneath the crenellations appears a roll-mould punctuated by images on each corner and in the centre of each face.

1) SW corner: winged hybrid.
2) S face: human head with a bone in its mouth. There are two small heads as label stops to the window moulding.
3) SE corner: a horned hybrid figure.
4) E face: very simply carved face with two big eyes within a thick hood. Possibly a baby. As on the south face, there are heads as label stops on the window below.
5) NE corner: a hybrid human-animal mouth-puller.
6) N face: hybrid monster. Heads as label stops to the window beneath.
7) NE corner: the image no longer exists.
8) E face: a grimacing human face. There are heads as label stops to the window beneath.

Devizes St John the Baptist. Originally a Norman cruciform church (consisting of a chancel, nave, transepts and crossing tower with staircase) which was altered in the fifteenth century by the addition of two chapels and the rebuilding of the nave and nave aisles (Guidebook; Pevsner, 1975: 205-207; Pugh, 1975)

Sculpture

I.   Capitals, interior of chancel, 12th century.

II.   Corbels, exterior of north side of chancel, 12th century.

III.   Corbels, interior of chapel, south side of chancel, 12th century.

IV.   Gargoyles, exterior of nave aisles (north and south), 15th century.

V.   Corbels, interior of nave aisles (north and south), 15th century.

I. Inter-linked blind arcading runs along the interior walls of the chancel. The arches are decorated with chevrons and scale ornament appears in a continuous band above and in the interstices where the arches intersect each other. The capitals are all carved with geometric motifs. Scallop or foliage patterns may also be found. The two capitals that support the chancel arch are similarly carved. That on the south side, however, on the west face, bears an image of a human head disgorging strap-like foliage. This is the only figurative carving in the chancel area.

II. The sequence of corbels is approximately 25 feet from the ground. East to west the sequence runs as follows:

1) Abstract squatting figure with oversized head and large almond-shaped eyes. The hands rest upon the knees and appear to pull open the mouth, out of which the tongue protrudes.

2) Exhibitionist couple. On the viewer's left a female figure squats, her genitals clearly visible. Her forearms and hands are missing. On the right a male figure, his body slightly angled away from the female, holds his erect penis in his right hand (Fig. 9. 5b).

3) Two beast heads with staring eyes and grinning, teeth-filled mouths.

4) Beast head and a naked female figure with her left hand on her genitals. Both bite upon the same length of rope.

5) Beast head with wide snout and open mouth lined with teeth. Small arms and human hands appear from each side of the figure, and the hands grip the lower jaw on each side of the mouth.

6) An embracing couple inside the open jaws of a beast head with bulging eyes.

III. Originally these corbels would have been on the exterior south side of the chancel and the east end of the south nave aisle, but are now inside having been enclosed by a 15th century chapel. The sequence is much plainer and more repetitive than that on the exterior of the north side of the chancel, suggesting that it was carved by different masons, possibly at an earlier or later date. There are similarities with the corbel sequence on the exterior of the chancel at St Mary's on the other side of the town.

A. Original east end of south aisle, south to north:

1) Open mouthed beast head with visible teeth.

2) Bundle of sticks tied with a rope.

3) Two heads, one human, one beast.

4) Beast head with wide open mouth.

5) Plain.

6) Beast head with open mouth and split tongue.

7) Bundle of sticks tied with a rope.

B. Original south side of chancel, west to east:

1) Simple feline beast head.

2) Bundle of sticks tied by a rope.

3) Partially obscured by the insertion of a fifteenth-century arch, but the image resembles a lion with its head turned backwards and its tail curved upwards through its hind legs.

4) Paired human and animal heads.

5) Beast head with wide open mouth.

6) Former cat head – the corbel has been cut away leaving only its outline.

7) Human head with open mouth.

8) Paired human and beast heads, each angled out at 45 degrees.

9) Beast head with protruding tongue.

10) Beast head with open mouth.

11) Plain.

12) Bundle of sticks tied by a rope.

13) Plain.

IV. The nave aisles are capped with a plain parapet beneath which runs a string course punctuated by gargoyles.

North side, east to west:

1) Squatting lion with oversized head and thick mane. The mouth is open.

2) Lion figure with shaggy body and general appearance similar to the above.

3) Human/animal figure. The figure squats upon the string course, the hands holding the back of the neck. The mouth is open wide and the eyes are half-closed. Shaggy limbs, rounded animal ears and talon-like feet complete the image. There appears to be something around the neck, like a collar.

South side, west to east:

1) Squatting lion with membranous wings attached at the shoulders and shaggy body hair.

2) Partially damaged leonine beast with bat wings and striated body.

3) Squatting beast with bat wings.

4) Squatting lion with extensive mane and extended tongue.

V. South side of south nave aisle, east to west:

1) Crowned male head with wavy hair and beard, the latter falling over the shield held over the chest by the left hand.

2) Demi-figure wearing a mitre and cloak fastened at the neck by a clasp. The figure has shoulder length straight hair and raises the right hand as if to brush it away from the shoulder. The east side of the corbel is damaged.

3) Demi-figure with thick wavy hair and hands clasped beneath the chin, wearing a long sleeved tunic buttoned up centrally.

4) Crowned male figure with long wavy hair and beard, holding a shield across the chest with both hands.

5) Demi-figure wearing a long sleeved tunic (similar to no. 3 above). The figure has thick wavy hair and holds the hands together, fingers straight, beneath the chin.

6) Crowned female demi-figure with long wavy hair and arms held upright, the hands holding the hair by the side of the head.

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7) Male demi-figure with shoulder-length wavy hair, moustache and beard on the chin. The figure wears a cap and holds his hands together beneath the chin.

8) Male head with thick beard and shoulder-length hair beneath a decorated cap. The hands grip the top of the tunic.

North side of north nave aisle, west to east:

1) Female demi-figure with thick coils of straight hair, and wearing some form of crown. The arms are held up, the hands resting on the hair at the shoulder level.

2) Male demi-figure in a suit of armour holding a plain shield before the chest with both hands.

3) Demi-figure with short wavy hair and cap, holding a plain shield before the chest with both hands.

4) Crowned male figure with long wavy hair and forked beard extending from the chin to fall over the top of the shield held before the chest with both hands.

5) Crowned female demi-figure with long wavy hair and arms held upwards, the hands cupping the hair on each side of the head.

6) Male demi-figure with thick curly hair and full beard. The hands are held apart just beneath the chin.

7) Male demi-figure with wavy hair and full beard, the hands gripping the top of the tunic.

These figures are all distinguished by a realism generally lacking in earlier corbel carvings. In particular the size of the head is in proportion to the rest of the body.

Devizes St Mary the Virgin. Built in 1143, only the chancel and parts of the south porch remain from this first phase, the nave, nave aisles and west tower all completely rebuilt at the beginning of the fifteenth century (Pevsner, 1975: 207-208; Pugh, 1975).

Sculpture

I.   Corbels, exterior of chancel (north and south sides), 12th century.

I. Romanesque corbel-table on both north and south sides of the chancel, most corbels plain or featuring very simple geometric motifs. On the north side of the chancel there are 20 corbels, on the south side there are 19. The corbel-table on the south side features two beast heads, very simply carved. They both possess similarities with the carved corbels on the south side of the chancel and east end of the nave aisle at nearby St John's.

II. On the string-course beneath the crenellated parapet, exterior of south nave aisle and south porch, west to east:

1) SW corner; leonine bat-winged beast with open mouth, shaggy body hair, hairy forelimbs, and crest of thick hair upon the top of the head.

2) SW corner of south porch; damaged demi-figure wearing a hood.

3) SE corner of south porch; demi-figure of a woman in a large square headdress, the latter seized by a ferocious quadruped beast with hairy body and open mouth.

4) S side of aisle; crouching full figure of a lion in profile, with a damaged head turned to one side.

5) SE corner of aisle; leonine bat-winged beast with open mouth, shaggy hairy body and hairy forelimbs, disgorging foliage from each side of the mouth.

Exterior of north nave aisle, east to west

6) Weathered, squat hybrid leonine bat winged beast with shaggy body.

7) Head of a woman in an elaborate headdress with two points on each corner, seized by a beast. The latter appears to one side, clinging on to the woman's forehead with its forelimbs. Compare to carving no. 3 in this series.

8) Weathered quadruped with membranous wings.

9) Demi-figure wearing a hood and holding a hollow object to the left ear.

10) Winged lion in profile. The wings are feathered and the head is partially damaged.

11) Lion in profile, head turned to the left, with a fierce expression. The mouth is open and a flowing mane hangs from the neck.

12) Winged leonine beast, similar to no. 6 in this series.

III.

South side of the nave, east to west:

1) Heart in foliage.

2) Single Hawthorn style leaf.

3) Crown.

4) Winged lion.

5) Two confronted leonine beasts, standing upright on their hind legs.

North side of the nave, east to west:

6) Highly weathered carving; impossible to decipher.

7) Beast and figure, again highly weathered.

8) Damaged.

9) Human head with an arm that holds a pipe in the right corner of the mouth.

10) Beast head with striated snout.

Edington St Mary, St Katherine and All Saints. In 968 King Edgar gave the estate of Edington to the house of Benedictine nuns at Romsey in Hampshire, in whose ownership it remained until the dissolution in 1539. The first church on the site, provided by the nuns for their tenants, probably dates to before the Conquest. Nothing of this remains today, however, for in the mid-fourteenth century William of Edington decided to turn the chantry chapel he had recently established within the church into a regular religious house. Hence the church became a monastic house of Augustinian canons. Most of the fabric dates to this period, the church today consisting of a chancel of three bays, central tower, north and south transepts, clerestoried nave of six bays with north and south aisles, and south porch with parvise. Crenellated parapets and ornate pinnacles distinguish the building (Rogers, 1997).

Sculpture

I.   Gargoyles and Grotesques, N and S transepts and chancel, 14th century.

I. The carvings are produced in the same oolitic stone as the main fabric of the building and are positioned at the base of the parapet, typically on either side of a buttress.

A. North transept, west face, NW corner;

1)   Reclining naked male figure.

B. North transept, north face, west to east;

1)   Weathered head with open mouth, curling horns, and two small forelimbs ending in cloven hooves.

2)   Human head with small horns and animal ears. The mouth is open.

C. North transept, east face, north to south;

1)   Winged beast with two claw-ended forelimbs and disc shaped head.

2)   Damaged carving, but the remains of a large head, feathered wings and a pair of talon-ended limbs are clear.

D. North side of chancel, west to east;

1)   Winged lion with open mouth and neat mane framing the face. The two forelimbs grip the stone. This is a post-medieval piece.

2)   Human head with long shaggy hair and open mouth.

3)   Human head and arms. The hands are placed upon the forehead and the mouth is open wide. The eyes are turned to the viewer's left.

4)   Hooded human head with open mouth.

5)   Lion head with open mouth and thick mane.

6)   Hybrid beast squatting upon the string course, its mouth open (the lower jaw is missing). The body and head are of an unidentifiable animal, the feet are bird's talons.

E. South side of chancel, east to west;

1) Beast with wide open mouth.

2) Dragon with wings and talon-ended forelimbs.

3) Inverted lion with wide open mouth and splayed legs.

4) Dog curved up as if asleep, its head beneath its tail.

5) Crouched quadruped with crest running across the top of its head from ear to ear.

6) Front part of a beast with open mouth and claw-ended forelimbs gripping the stone.

F. South transept, east face, north to south;

1) Demi-figure (female) with long straight hair, wearing a garment with buttons vertically along the middle. The figure supports her head with her right hand; the left hand rests at her side. Literature inside the church suggests that this a local woman of ill-repute.

2) Human head (male) and arms. The arms spring from some way behind the head. The head has long hair and a wide beard growing from the chin. The edge of the right sleeve is serrated, which might suggest buttons.

G. South transept, south face, east to west;

1) Human/animal figure with human face and open mouth, animal ears, and a crest of hair along the top of the head. The arms terminate in cloven hooves.

2) Bat gargoyle with broken snout, wings, large ears and claws that grip the lower rim of the string course. The carving is weathered.

Lacock Abbey. House for Augustinian Canonesses founded in 1229. The buildings were mainly completed by the mid-thirteenth century. Unusually the cloister lay to the north of the church (although nearby examples of a similar arrangement include Malmesbury, Old Sarum Bradenstoke and Ivychurch). At the Reformation the church was destroyed and the remaining monastic buildings were converted into a

manor house. This has ensured the survival of a great deal of the claustral buildings as well as the cloister which was rebuilt in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Chew, 1956; Pevsner and Cherry, 1975: 284-289).

Sculpture

I.   Roof bosses, south, east, and north cloister ranges, 15th century.

I. The number accompanying each boss in the description that follows refers to the plan (Fig. A1. 3). Purely foliate and heraldic bosses are omitted.

Bay A:

2) Two eagles and two owls, each pairing opposite the other.

4) A group of four heads, all of whom appear to be nuns. The headdresses vary.

5) Green man disgorging a single stem of foliage.

Bay B

2) Group of four heads: a) male head with beard; b) male head wearing a cap; c) head wearing a hood; d) female head wearing a headdress and gorget.

3) Human head surrounded by red foliage. The mouth is open.

4) Four images – two green men and two leaves.

6) Group of four heads. Three of these are human and disgorge a single broad leaf from the mouth, the other head is a monster with its mouth open and tongue out.

7) Face with finely carved beard and hair.

8) Two heads and two leaves. One of the heads has a hand wrapped around his headdress, the other has his mouth open.

10) Against the wall: Two heads, one of which appears to bite something, the other sticks the tongue out.

Bay C

4) Green man. Two sprigs of lush foliage sprout from the corners of the mouth and grow up each side of the serene looking face.

7) Two sinuous intertwined dragons disgorging foliage (Fig. 5. 19).

Numbering starts from
the northernmost boss
in each bay and proceeds
in a clockwise direction.
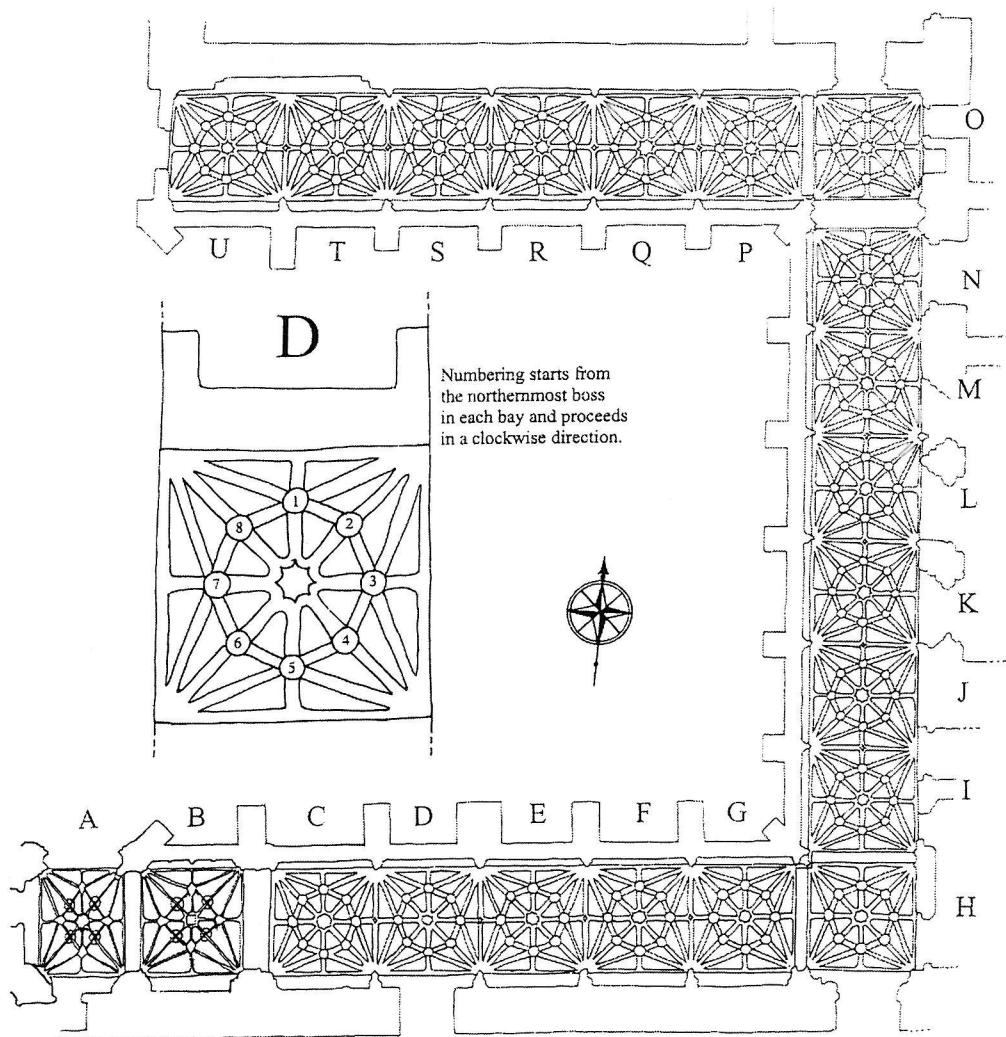
Figure A1. 3 Plan of the cloister at Lacock Abbey to show the position of the roof bosses.

Bay D

3) A foliage boss which, on one side, hides a small head disgorging greenery.

4) A human heart from which sprouts foliage.

Bay E

1) Bird with head between its legs and foliage sprouting from its rear end.

2) Swirl foliage design with a feeding bird at the edge.

3) Owl in foliage. In its beak it holds a small rodent by the tail.

6) Two headed eagle with outstretched wings.

7) Beast-headed mermaid holding a mirror and disgorging foliage that divides into two stems (Fig. 5. 27).

8) Human tumbler whose face appears through the upturned legs (Fig. 9. 1).

Bay F

This is a complete bay of heraldic shield bosses.

Bay G

7) Wyvern playing a harp. The rear end of the body coils round beneath the harp and sprouts into foliage. The long snout and animal ears are similar to the creature on a boss in the crossing tower at Bishop's Cannings.

All the other bosses are foliate.

Bay H

1) A dog emerging from the neck of a quadruped (possibly a horse) and leaning forward to hold the tail of the host animal. Around its thick neck is a belt, shield and sword.

2) The initial "q" being eaten by a monster. The rear of its body turns into a foliate stem that grows through the letter.

3) A bearded feline wielding a sword and disgorging a human hand which grips a staff.

4) Human/animal figure. The head is that of a woman wearing a headdress that hangs to the neck. The body is that of a quadruped with shaggy legs. The tail curves between the rear legs and sprouts into foliage.

5) A fox standing upon an open book. The head of the fox is now missing.

6) Swan and fishes.

7) Grimacing centaur wearing a hood and disgorging a single thick stem that dissolves into profuse foliage. With the left hand the creature holds onto foliage growing beside.

8) Two beasts, one of which swallows (or disgorges) a thick rope-like cable, possibly an initial 'I'. This creature has a dog's head, long neck, feathered wings and two legs like a bird. One of the wings pierces the cable. The other beast has a sinuous body like a dragon, two membranous wings, no legs and a small beard on the chin. It bites at the opposite end of the cable.

Bay I

3) Two birds beak to beak, foliage sprouting from between them (Fig. 5. 21).

4) Male harpy-type monster. The head is hooded and wears a beard. The body features membranous wings, bird's legs and a long coiled tail.

8) Human figure looking through a hoop. A dog appears beside him.

Bay J

2) Animal holding a goose by the neck.

6) Worm type dragon – no wings or legs. There is a long snout and open mouth and the rear of the body sprouts into two leafy foliage stems (Fig. 5. 18).

8) A bird from whose mouth sprouts foliage.

Bay K

All these bosses are foliate.

Bay L

2) Mermaid. Long straight tresses fall to the waist. In her left hand she holds aloft a circular mirror, in her right she holds up a comb. A large fish tail curves up the side of the boss.

6) Hybrid horse/fish.

8) Swan/goose.

Bay M

1) Archer wearing a tunic and surrounded by foliage.

4) Quadruped devouring foliage.

8) Bird in foliage.

Bay N

2) Figure looking through a crescent-shape, held beneath the chin.

4) Fox with long pointed ears, carrying a goose by the neck.

6) Figure astride a goat, around the neck of which is chained a flask. The figure holds onto the chain, resting it over his shoulder.

8) Figure breaking a stick with his shin.

Bay O

All the bosses here are foliate.

Bay P

2) Centaur wearing a hood and tunic decorated with red lines upon a white background. With one hand he holds the tail.

4) Hybrid bird/monster, the front half of an eagle with feathered wings, the rear half consisting of a thick, ridged and coiled reptilian tail.

6) Goat.

8) Hybrid swan or goose with fish tail.

Bay Q

2) A foliage boss with birds at the sides.

8) Harpy with long sinuous tail and membranous wings. The figure wears a hood and is surrounded by foliage (Fig. 8. 12).

Bay R

2) Hybrid goat/fish.

4) Griffin.

6) Dog amongst foliage.

Bay S

2) Mermaid with long golden hair to the waist. She holds a comb and mirror (Fig. 8. 11c).

6) Stag.

8) Fish eating a rabbit.

Bay T

4) Human-animal hybrid inspecting a urine flask.

8) Pelican in her piety.

Bay U

2) Swan/goose.

4) Human figure on the back of a horse, holding both the mane and the tail.

6) Agnus Dei.

8) Bear with a seat strapped to its back.

Twenty-one bays, each bay with a minimum of nine carved bosses (of which most are painted) makes this an incredible resource. What is striking about these images is their carving in the round. To view a boss head on is to miss much of the detail that occurs around the sides of the piece and which looks out more directly at the casual observer strolling beneath. This is particularly the case with the heads found among the two late-fourteenth century bays (A and B). Furthermore, the bosses in these two

bays are curious in that they are not so much roof bosses proper but more infills to the angles made by the vaulting. The only change in style throughout the entire sequence is between this late fourteenth-century work and the fifteenth-century work (bays C – U). In each group the style is consistent throughout. Only two bosses bear any overt religious meaning. Curiously enough these are in bays T and U which are directly above the lavatory where the nuns would have washed their hands. One is a 'pelican in her piety' image, the other an Agnus Dei. Otherwise the series displays a remarkable range of green men, mermaids (3 in total), hybrid monsters and animals. Foliate and heraldic bosses are commonplace too but omitted from the above list.

Lacock St Cyriac. Apart from the north and south transepts (*c.* 1300) an entirely late medieval church. The high, crenellated nave with clerestory, nave aisles, west tower and chapel on the north side of the chancel all date to the fifteenth century (Pevsner, 1975: 283-284).

Sculpture

I.   Gargoyles, grotesques and label stops, exterior of north nave aisle, nave, tower, stair turret, north and south chapel and chancel.

A. Label stops, west face north nave aisle:
1) North side of the window; cat-like animal head with open mouth, teeth and extended tongue.
2) South side of the window; monster with a bulbous body, two scaly forelegs, and a head well below its shoulders. Its mouth is open revealing a short pointed tongue.

B. Label stops, north face north nave aisle, west to east:
1) The first window has three carved figures, the usual two at the termination of the mould and one directly above the westernmost image: a) west label stop – winged

monster; b) above (a), carved into the mould – damaged carving of an eagle-like bird; c) east label stop – grimacing owl.

2) Second window, four carved figures: a) east label stop – bearded head with a right arm that holds a blank label; b) above (a), carved into the course of the hood-mould – bird with cloven hooves; c) opposite (b), and likewise carved into the course of the hood-mould – damaged; d) east label stop – owl with a heavily ridged face.

3) Third window, two carved figures: a) west label stop – damaged, possibly a bat; b) east label stop – creature scratching its head with one of its long legs.

C. Grotesques, north face north nave aisle, west to east:

1) Beast head with open mouth.

2) Beast head with two dragons on either side. The dragons each pull a corner of the mouth open and chew on the head's ears.

3) Monster with wings.

4) Two creatures, one of which preys upon the other. The predator is a lion with its tail curved upward between its rear legs. The lion holds the head of the other creature between its forepaws and bites into its head. The preyed upon demi-creature is carved in less detail than the lion.

D. Gargoyles and grotesques, north side of the nave, west to east:

1) Foliage design.

2) Romanesque-style head with open mouth, teeth incised upon the lips, blank, almond-shaped eyes and a tongue that sticks straight out. A big leaf appears to one side.

3) Head with a pipe hanging from one corner of the mouth. Wears a hat that flops to one side.

4) Damaged.

5) Four-leaves.

6) Two dragons, their heads flop over the roll-mould. This is the last image before any more that might exist are obscured by the roof of the north transept.

E. Gargoyles and grotesques, south side of the nave, west to east

1) On the southwest corner appears a monster chained by the neck to the church into whose mouth file possible figures (this part is heavily eroded). Below this, on the top of the buttress, are two embracing figures and what appears to be a large pot (?).

2) Head looking through an upturned crescent.

3) Two confronted monsters.

4) Winged creature, quite heavily weathered.

5) Shield on foliage.

6) Foliage.

7) Mouth-puller gargoyle.

F. Gargoyles, tower:

1) NE corner; beast head with open mouth.

2) NW corner; heavily weathered beast.

3) SW corner; mouth-pulling head.

4) SE corner; beast head with open mouth.

G. Grotesques, stair turret:

There are carvings at the base and the top of its blind arcades. The latter are simple beast heads with open mouths. Starting at the junction of the turret with the north face of the tower and proceeding anti-clockwise the carvings at the base are as follows

1) Grinning bearded head.

2) Two confronted harpy-like figures? Although heavily damaged – their heads are missing – the bodies suggest two creatures, each with two legs and a large avian body tapering into a tail.

3) Head with its mouth open and tongue extended. Three smaller heads grow out of the top of its head.

4) Head with skinny arms and hands that rest upon the corners of the mouth.

5) Eroded.

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H. Gargoyles, north face of north chapel:

Two reset gargoyles, each one a hybrid creature.

I. Gargoyle, south chapel:

Winged hybrid on the south-east corner.

J. Gargoyles, south side of the chancel:

Two hybrid monsters, the other an owl that appears to bite its lower beak.

Little Langford St Nicholas. Rural church of flint and stone chequerwork consisting of a chancel with north vestry and a nave with south transeptal chapel. Largely rebuilt in 1864. A Romanesque doorway complete with tympanum, carved lintel, and one order of shafts with carved capitals has been incorporated into the south wall of the nave (Ponting, 1908; Powell, 1909; Crowley, 1995a).

Sculpture

I.   Capitals and tympanum, south door, first half of the twelfth century.

1) West capital; an assortment of beasts; a hybrid consisting of the front half of a
   horse with a thick, beaded serpent's tail fills the south face of the capital, while
   on the east face an inverted stag and the head of a bird appear. The style of the
   capital carvings bears similarities with those on the capitals throughout the east
   end and exterior south door at Romsey Abbey. In particular, the hybrid beast's
   tail should be compared with the dragon's bodies on the capitals in the south
   transept and retrochoir which are also beaded (Romsey I7b, I20a).

2) East capital; a male figure with prominent moustache holds up two serpents
   which curl their tails around the figure's outstretched legs (Fig. 6. 15). Diagonal
   lines across his body indicate a tunic-like item of clothing. Until the restoration of

the church in 1864 this capital was concealed by the west wall of the south transept. Hence it is in much better condition than the opposite capital.

3) Tympanum and lintel. The tympanum is carved with a vertical row of geometric designs consisting of a cross with three spheres in each division, the figure of a bishop, and a scrawny tree of life with birds in the branches. The carvings appear to have been done on two separate pieces of stone that have been inserted into the field of the tympanum, and the surrounding gaps filled in. The lintel of the door is carved with a hunting scene – a boar is attacked by hounds while a figure with a spear watches from the easternmost side. Geometric motifs are set into the wall above the arch. There are three four-leafed petal designs, and one carved stone featuring a similar design to those within the tympanum itself – a cross with three spheres in each division.

Melksham, St Michael and All Angels. Large, late medieval church with clerestory, west tower, chancel, north and south chapels and crenellated nave and nave aisles. The tower was originally a crossing tower but was removed to the west end in 1845 when the church was restored. The chancel was restored in 1881 (Chettle and Tillot, 1953: 104-105; Pevsner, 1975: 342-343).

> *Sculpture*
> I.   Label stops, exterior south side of the nave, 15th century.
> II.   Grotesques, exterior south side of chancel, 15th century.

I. Only one window is associated with carvings. From the west, the images are as follows;
1) A fox running with a dead goose which it holds in its jaw by the neck (see roof boss in Lacock Abbey for comparison).
2) (Above window) A giant with a huge belly and pointed teeth gnawing bones (similar images.

3) A dog wearing some kind of collar and three birds (swan/goose and ducks).

II. West to east;

1) A startled beast hanging on to the string-course to which it is chained by the neck. It looks over its right shoulder.

2) Inverted winged quadruped.

Mere St Michael the Archangel. Fourteenth- to fifteenth-century 'High Gothic at its best' (Parker and Chandler, 1993: 157). The church of St Michael the Archangel consists of a distinctive west tower with four corner pinnacles, a nave with north and south aisles, and a chancel with chapels to the north and the south. The chancel may date to the thirteenth-century. The north chapel was originally built as a chantry c. 1325 and extended later in the same century. The south chapel was likewise a chantry, built c. 1350 (Pevsner, 1975: 345-347).

Sculpture

I.   Corbels, interior of Bettesthorne Chapel, south side of the chancel, and the west tower, mid-14C.

II.   Misericords, choir, early 15th century.

III. Roof bosses, Bettesthorne Chapel, 15th century.

I

A. Bettesthorne Chapel. Although six stone corbels meet the posts of the wooden roof only two are sculpted into figurative subjects (the four corbels in the corners are plain, the two carved ones occur opposite each other in the centre of the wall). These are

1) (North wall) A human figure with an oversized reptilian head who bends his legs back and up to expose his anus and genitals. Out of a barely muzzled snout an enormous tongue extends onto his testes.

2) (South wall) A human/animal figure with a monstrous head very similar to its opposite. The figure appears to recline and play with a rope.

Stylistically both carvings are difficult to place. The size is typical of late medieval work (more typical of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, rather than the fourteenth, so they are possibly reset or reused) yet their style draws clear parallels with Romanesque carving, in particular the enormous eyes and the deep grooves in the head and face. The subjects are more typical of earlier work too.

B. West Tower. Two large stone corbels, both set into corners and quite similar in style and subject to the two in the Bettesthorne chapel.

1) (SW corner) A human/lion head with a protruding tongue.

2) (NW corner) A human head with animal ears.

II. The south range of five early fifteenth century stalls run as follows (east to west):

1) Centre: head with tongue extended and foliage creeping from both sides of the mouth (although the easternmost sprig has been damaged). Left and right supporters: foliage.

2) Centre: Tudor Rose design. Left and right supporters: foliage.

3) Centre: head with three-pronged beard (chin only). Left and right supporters: foliage.

4) Centre: foliage. Left and right supporters: foliage.

5) Centre: Angel bearing a shield. Left and right supporters: foliage.

Although there are twelve misericords in the chancel, only the south side bears genuine medieval work. The north range of four stalls dates to c. 1948 while the Minister's individual misericord stalls on both sides are early twentieth century (Church leaflet). Remnant, however, states that the northern range of misericords date to the 16th century (1969: 166).

III. Roof bosses, interior of the Bettesthorne chapel, south side of the chancel, 15th century

Four square wooden bosses, each carved with similar heads disgorging foliage from their mouths.

Steeple Langford All Saints. Built of flint and ashlar the church consists of a chancel with north vestry, nave with north aisle and south porch and a west tower. Although largely rebuilt in the fourteenth century traces of earlier work (thirteenth-century) are suggested by the chancel and tower arches (Crowley, 1995b). A consecration date of 1326 is recorded for the north aisle (Ponting, 1908; Pevsner, 1975: 483).

Sculpture

I. Roof bosses, north nave aisle, 14th century.

I. Eight square wooden bosses, four on each E-W beam, many of which are damaged and some blackened.

A. Northernmost beam, west to east;

1) Quadruped (bear?) against a foliate background.

2) Boar in foliage.

3) Harpy – the head of a woman with wavy hair upon the body of a chicken like bird.

4) Humanoid head either biting on or regurgitating something. The carving is quite badly damaged.

B. Southernmost beam, west to east;

1) Damaged carving of leaves and stems.

2) Lion with thick spiralling mane, surrounded by foliage.

3) Dove biting a sprig of foliage.

4) Dog wearing a headdress and disgorging foliage stems (Fig. 5. 26).

Maps

Figure A1. 4 Position of the study area in relation to England and Wales.

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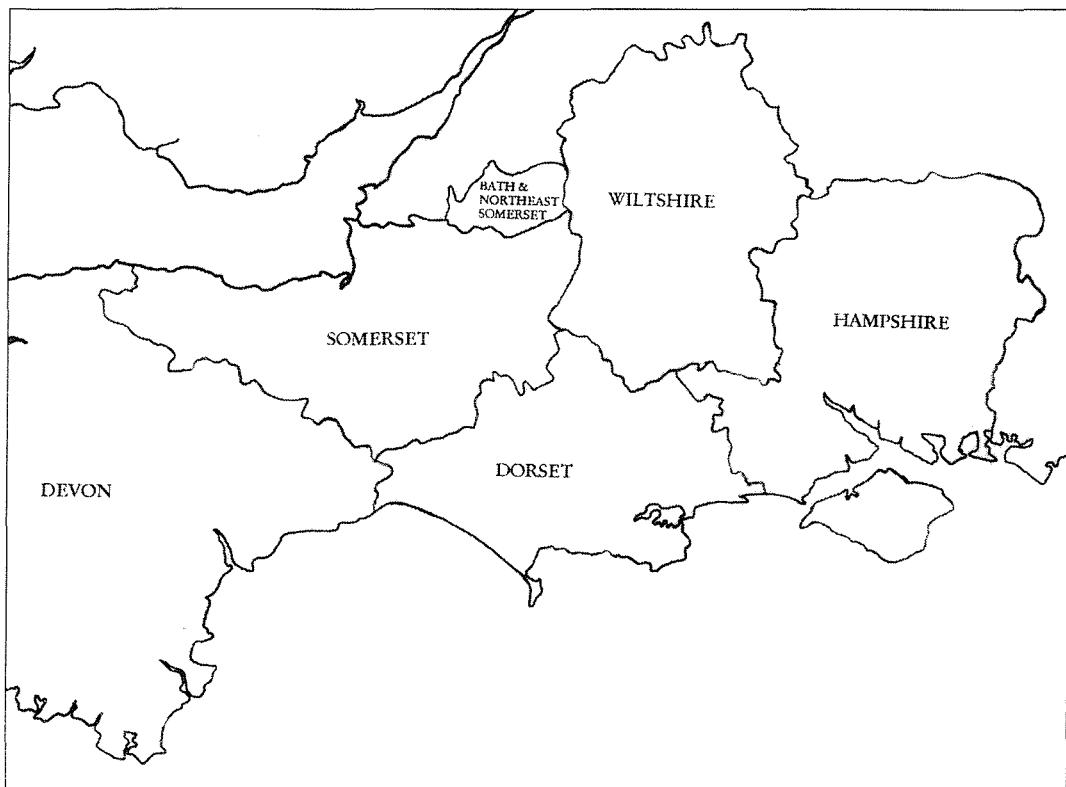
Figure A1. 5 Location of counties within the region. Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset and Wiltshire provided the bulk of the material, with additional data collected from northeast Somerset and parts of east Devon.

Graphs and Tables

Corbel-table Imagery from Sites in the South of England
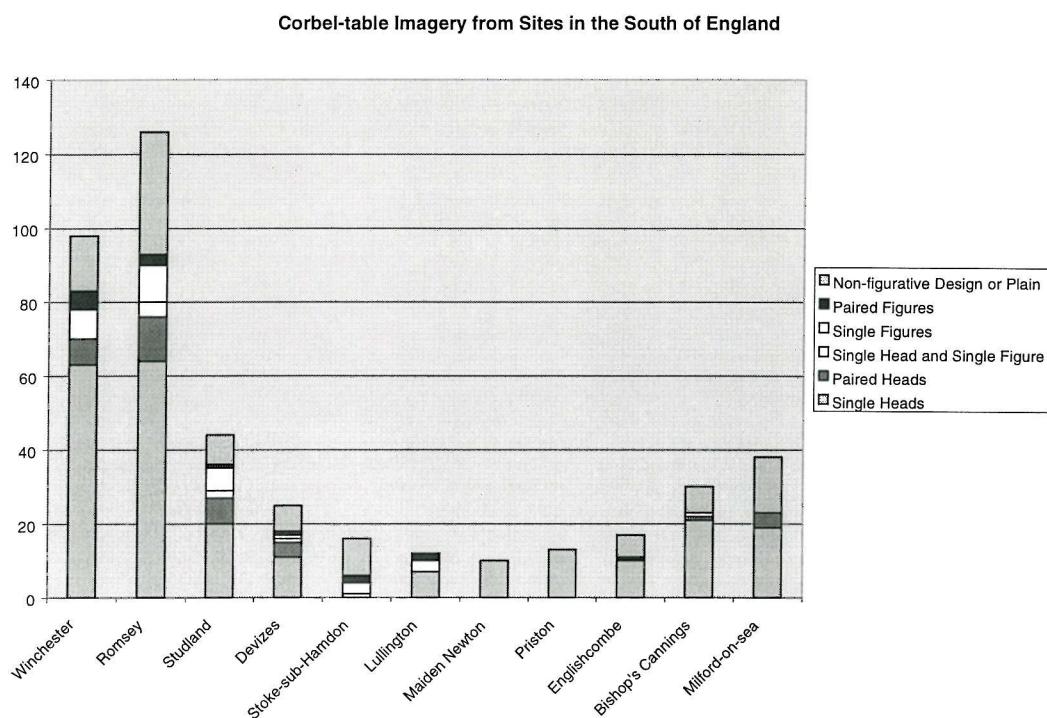
Figure A2. 1 Corbel-table imagery from a selection of sites in the south of England. (Heads and figures denotes human and animal or beast heads or figures.) The chart clearly shows that heads are the predominant image carved upon Romanesque and early Gothic corbeltables. Even in those sequences characterised by a diverse range of images, for example, Winchester Cathedral, Romsey Abbey, Studland, and Devizes (St John), the single human, beast, animal or composite human/animal head is still the most numerous. At only one site (Stoke-sub-Hamdon) is the head motif in the minority, in this case overshadowed by geometric designs. A similar example is the church of St Mary, Devizes, upon whose chancel the corbel-table features mostly plain corbels among which a few beast heads may be found. At those locations where there is less diversity in the imagery the carved head is still predominant. There are no sites without a carved head. It appears to be the basic constituent of carved corbel-tables in the region. At two sites (Maiden Newton and Priston) the head is the only image carved on the corbels.

Variations upon the Head Motif

Legend:
- □ Human Head with Animal Features
- ▨ Human Head with Arms
- □ Human Head
- ■ Beast Head with Geometric Ornament
- □ Beast Head with Human Head or Figure in the Mouth
- □ Beast Head with Animal in the Mouth
- ▨ Beast Head with Forelimbs/Arms
- □ Beast Head

Sites (x-axis): Winchester, Romsey, Studland, Devizes, Stoke-sub-Hamdon, Lullington, Maiden Newton, Priston, Englishcombe, Bishop's Cannings, Milford-on-sea

Figure A2. 2 Variations upon the head motif in Romanesque and early Gothic corbel-tables in the south of England. The chart shows that although variations between sites exist, in general there is a balance between the representation of human and animal heads on corbels during this period. Moreover, composite human and animal heads are fairly common, being found at six of the sample sites. However, this appears to change in the late Romanesque or early Gothic period, as illustrated by the two early thirteenth-century sequences at Milford-on-sea and Bishop's Cannings, each of which emphasize the human head above the beast head. There are no composite heads at these two sites either. This is indicative of later medieval corbel carving trends, such as the sequences of carved corbels at Alton, the interior of the naves at Bishop's Cannings, Devizes (St John), Oaksey, Wilsford, and Calne, which represent the heads of human figures only. Some of these series are formulaic: Oaksey, Wilsford, Calne, and Bishop's Cannings for example simply alternate the head of a crowned male figure with that of a mitred ecclesiastic. Another feature of later medieval corbel sequences is that they tend to occur inside buildings. Gargoyles and grotesques carved with monsters and animal figures tend to occur on the exterior of buildings in this period.

Paired Heads and Figures in the Corbel-table Sample
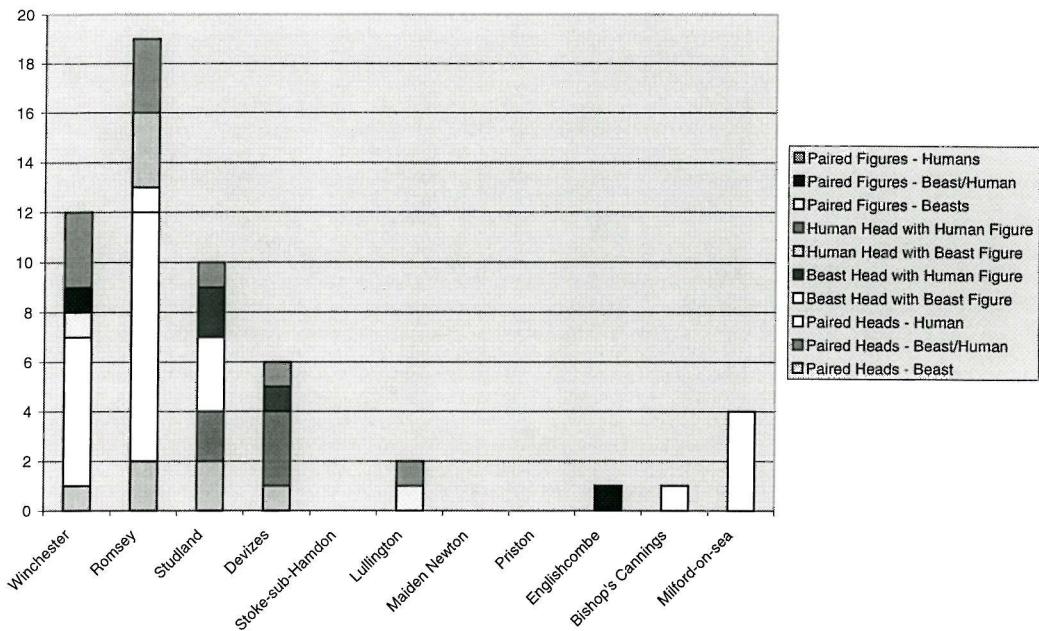
Figure A2. 3 Paired heads and figures in Romanesque and early Gothic corbel-tables in the south of England. This chart complements the previous one on heads and redresses an imbalance at some sites. Romsey, for example, displayed a greater amount of single beast heads than human heads in the previous chart. Here it is possible to see that it is Romsey which has the greatest amount of paired human head corbels. Again, the sites with the greater diversity of carvings still rely upon the head for their imagery. The later sites, Milford and Bishop's Cannings, stand out again for their representation of human heads only.

Figure A2. 4 Carved heads among gargoyles and grotesques from a selection of sites in the south of England. A rough balance exists between beast heads and their variants and the variety of human heads at these sites. In this respect little has changed from the Romanesque period, gargoyles and grotesques taking over the figurative roles of exterior corbels.

Architectural Medium and Location of Mouth-puller Images from a Selection of Romanesque Sites in the South of England

Figure legend: Interior capital, Exterior capital, Interior corbel, Exterior corbel
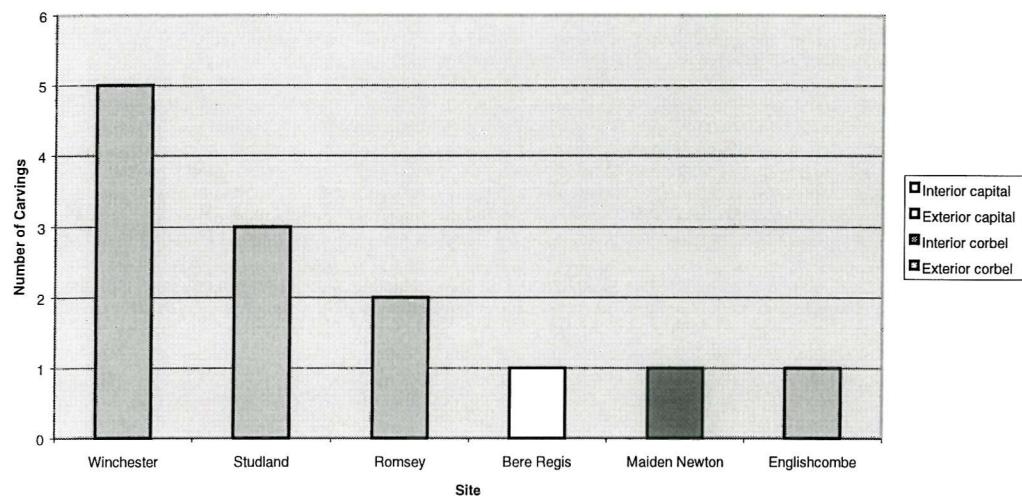
Figure A2. 5

Varieties of Mouth-pulling Heads from a Selection of Romanesque Sites in the South of England

Figure legend: Beast, Hybrid Human-Animal, Human accompanied by Beast, Human
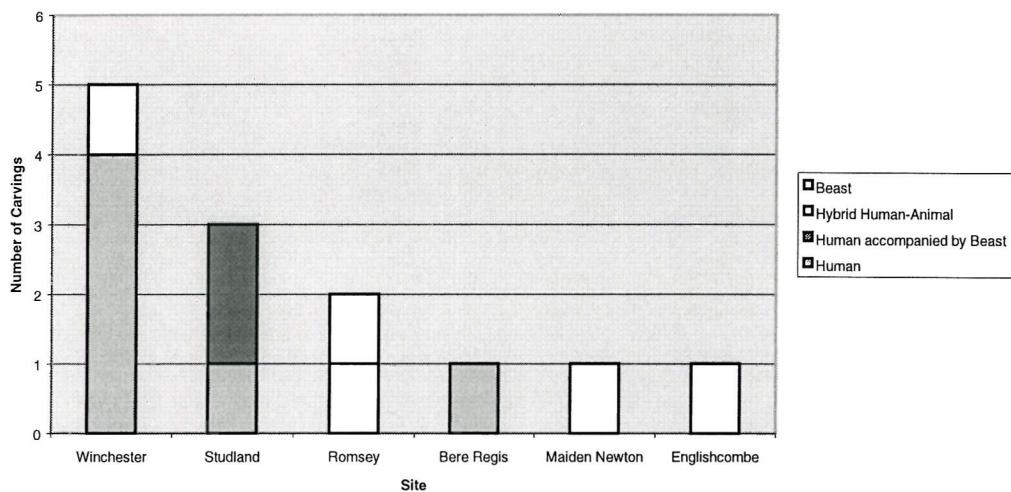
Figure A2. 6

Architectural Media and Location of Later Medieval Mouth-puller Carvings from Selected Sites in the South of England
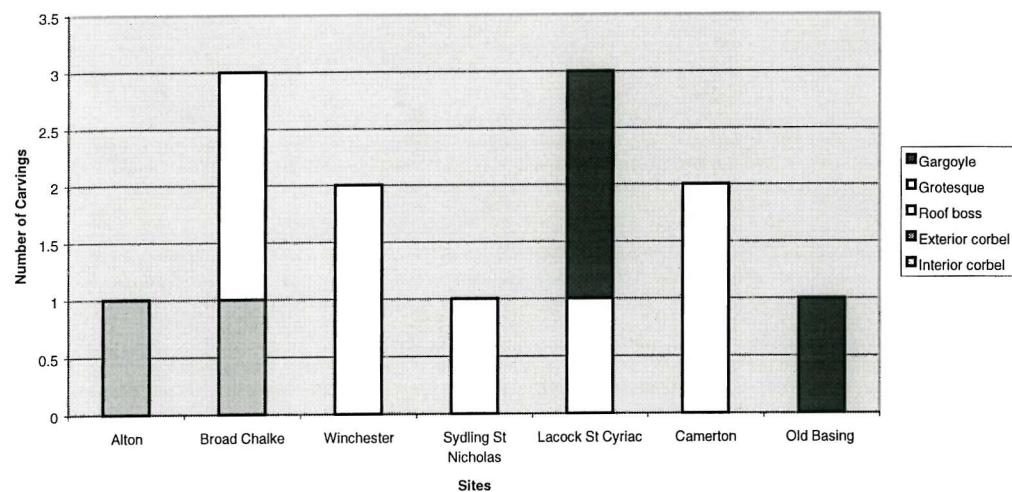
Figure A2. 7

Examples of Mouth-Puller Carvings in the Medieval Architectural Sculpture of the South of England					
Site	Date	Medium	I/E	Location	Carving
Winchester Cathedral	e12C	Corbel	E	S transept, W side	Head with skinny arms pulling open corners of mouth.
					Horned head.
				S transept, E side	Head, hands pull the mouth open by the lower jaw.
				N transept, E side	Head, right hand rests on right eye, left hand pulls at edge of open mouth.
					Head with small hands.
Studland, St Nicholas	e-m 12C	Corbel	E	NW corner of nave	Human mouth-puller with distorted face and long drooping tongue. Paired with beast head.
				SW corner of nave	As above.
				S side of nave	Two human heads looking out in opposite directions, one pulls open the mouth with skinny arms.
Romsey Abbey	e-m 12C	Corbel	E	N side N chancel aisle	Head with pointed animal ears.
					Beast head, both hands holding lower jaw.
Bere Regis, St John	12C	Capital	I	S side of nave	Male head with arms and hands pulling mouth from corners.
Maiden Newton, St Mary	12C	Corbel	I	N side of nave	Beast head with paws in the corner of its mouth.
Englishcombe, St Peter	12C	Corbel	E	N side of chancel	Human head with paw-like hands that pull the corners of the mouth.
Alton, St Lawrence	?	Corbel	I	NW corner of nave	Reused image, possibly 12C, now in 15C context. Human head.
Broad Chalke, All Saints	14C	Corbel	I	N wall of nave	Head with arms sprouting from near the top of the carving.
Winchester Cathedral	14C	Roof Boss	I	N aisle of nave	Human head with protruding tongue (two bosses).
Sydling St Nicholas, St Nicholas	15C	Grotesque	E	SE corner of tower	Squatting human figure, pulling open the corners of the mouth.
Lacock, St Cyriac	15C	Grotesque	E	Stair turret to tower	Human head with skinny arms that rest upon the corners of the mouth.
Camerton, St Peter	15-16C	Grotesque	E	E side of tower	Human mouth-pulling head set upon the back of an inverted quadruped (2 carvings).
Old Basing, St Mary	15-16C	Gargoyle	E	W end of nave	Possibly reset head with horns.
Broad Chalke, All Saints	16C	Grotesque	E	SW corner of S porch	Horizontal human figure.
				NW corner of S porch	Human head.

Figure A2. 8 Key: I/E = Interior/Exterior; e, m, or l in the Date column signify early, middle or late.

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					Mouth-Pullers Flanked by Figures

Site	Date	Medium	I/E	Location	Carving
Cerne Abbas, Dorset	15C	Grotesque	E	NW corner N nave aisle	Beast head flanked by pair of human figures.
				SW corner S nave aisle	As above, but with a third figure emerging from the open mouth.
Chetnole, Dorset	15C	Gargoyle	E	NW corner of tower	Two full human figures wearing long-sleeved knee-length tunics flank a central beast head.
Combe St Nicholas, Somerset	15C	Grotesque?	E	NE corner of tower	Beast head flanked by pair of leonine/serpentine creatures.
Lacock, St Cyriac, Wiltshire	15C	Grotesque	E	N side of N nave aisle	Central beast head flanked by two dragons.
Longburton, Dorset	15C	Grotesque	E	SE corner of tower	Beast head between two human figures.
Mappowder, Dorset	15C	Gargoyle	E	SW corner S aisle	Two grimacing human figures flank a central beast head.
Sherborne, Dorset	15C	Gargoyle	E	S side S chancel aisle	Two figures flank a leonine head.
Stinsford, Dorset	15C	Grotesque	E	S side S nave aisle	Human head with single human figure.
				SE corner of S nave aisle	Beast head flanked by two human figures.
Stoke-sub-Hamdon, Somerset	15C	Gargoyle	E	SE corner of tower	Beast head flanked by pair of human figures.
Sydling St Nicholas, Dorset	15C	Grotesque	E	NE corner of tower	Beast head flanked by two grinning beasts.

Figure A2. 9 Key: I/E = Interior/Exterior

Mirror and Comb

17%
30%
4%
49%

☐ Mermaids holding a mirror

■ Mermaids holding a comb

☐ Mermaids holding both mirror and comb

☐ Mermaids holding neither mirror nor comb

a

Flora and Fauna

17%
4%
49%
30%

☐ Mermaids associated with fish

■ Mermaids with a lion

☐ Mermaids associated with foliage

☐ Mermaids with no plant or animal associations

b

Hair and Headgear

8%
51%
29%
4%
8%

☐ Mermaids with bound hair

■ Mermaids with shoulder-length hair

☐ Mermaids wearing a crown

☐ Mermaids with no hair

■ Mermaids with waist-length hair

c

Figure A2. 10 Aspects of medieval mermaid imagery among architectural sculpture in the south of England. These pie-charts were generated from a sample of 23 late medieval images drawn from the following sites:
Canterbury Cathedral
Christchurch Priory
Chichester Cathedral
Exeter Cathedral (3)
Faversham
Highworth
Lacock Abbey (3)
Oaksey
Poughill
Queen Camel
Sherborne
Stoodleigh (4)
Wells Cathedral (2)
Winchester Cathedral
Zennor

From this sample it can be stated that the most typical late medieval image of the mermaid depicts her holding both a mirror and a comb, with unbound, waist-length hair, and without foliage or animals.

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References

Abbreviations:

AB; Art Bulletin

AH; Art History

AHR; American Historical Review

AJA; American Journal of Archaeology

Antiq. J.; Antiquaries Journal

Arch. C.; Archaeologia Cantiana

Arch. J.; Archaeological Journal

ASE; Anglo-Saxon England

JBAA; Journal of the British Archaeological Association

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     (eds) 2000. *Medieval Folklore: An Encyclopedia of Myths, Legends, Tales, Beliefs and*
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JMH; Journal of Medieval History

JRS; Journal of Roman Studies

JRSAI; Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland

JWCI; Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes.

PDNHAFC; Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Antiquarian Field Club

PDNHAS; Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society

PHFC; Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club

PIWNHAS; Proceedings of the Isle of Wight Natural History and Archaeological Society

PSANHS; Proceedings of the Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society

SANH; Somerset Archaeology and Natural History (The Proceedings of the Somerset
     Archaeological and Natural History Society).

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WI; Word and Image

WANHM; Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine

YAJ; Yorkshire Archaeological Journal

ZFK; Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte

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