ABSTRACT

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The English Claim to Gothic: Contemporary Approaches to an Age-Old Debate
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The Gothic Revival of the nineteenth century in Europe aroused a debate concerning the origin of a style already six centuries old. Besides the underlying quandary of how to define or identify "Gothic" structures, the Victorian revivalists fought vehemently over the national birthright of the style. Although Gothic has been traditionally acknowledged as having French origins, English revivalists insisted on the autonomy of English Gothic as a distinct and independent style of architecture in origin and development.

Surprisingly, nearly two centuries later, the debate over Gothic's nationality persists, though the nationalistic tug-of-war has given way to the more scholarly contest to uncover the style's authentic origins. Traditionally, scholarship took structural or formal approaches, which struggled to classify structures into rigidly defined periods of formal development. As the Gothic style did not develop in such a cleanly linear fashion, this practice of retrospective labeling took a second place to cultural approaches that consider the Gothic style as a material manifestation of an overarching conscious Gothic cultural movement. Nevertheless, scholars still frequently look to the Isle-de-France when discussing Gothic's formal and cultural beginnings.

Gothic historians have entered a period of reflection upon the field's historiography, questioning methodological paradigms. This study examines the developments of recent scholarship toward providing long sought explanations of English Gothic as both a national style and member of an international architectural phenomenon.

THE ENGLISH CLAIM TO GOTHIC: CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES

TO AN AGE-OLD DEBATE

by

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DEDICATION

To Mum and Dad, without whom my formidable fancies could never take flight.

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INTRODUCTION

Who Owns Gothic?

At the outset of the nineteenth-century Gothic Revival in Europe, the new designation for the

celebrated style, "Gothic," was a matter of hot contention, and nowhere more heated than in

England. The first matter of disquiet was the term itself, assigned during the Renaissance as a

derogation of the style thought primitive by classically minded eras.[1] Of this linguistic slight,

writer and spokesman for the Gothic Revival John Carter complained it to be "a vulgar epithet, an

ignorant by-word, a low nickname, given to hold up [in] shame and ignominy our ancient English

Architecture, the pride of human art, and the excellence of all earthly scientific labours."[2] Besides

championing the medieval architectural developments as the climax of all structural achievement,

Carter's statement is significant in its blatant national attribution of the style to his own

motherland. In fact, his passionate pride in the Gothic form is rooted in what he calls its "peculiar

propriety," for he asserts the style to have been "invented in this country... [and] here brought to

its highest state of perfection." The term *Gothic*, thought Carter and with considerable national

support, ought to be substituted with the simple locution *English*.

The search to determine England's relationship to Gothic architecture and her role in the

style's materialization into an aesthetic form that was universally recognized by the time the call

for its revival broke out does not begin with Carter, nor with the revivalist movement. As early as

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[1] These include the Renaissance (during which the term *Gothic* in relation to post-Romanesque architecture was first coined), and neoclassical, or neo-Palladian era in Europe.
[2] John Frew, "Gothic is English: John Carter and the Revival of the Gothic as England's Style," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians,* Vol. 45, No. 2, (June, 1986), 5.

the 1640s, John Evelyn first translated Vasari's term *gotico* into English and applied it to English medievalism.[3] Contemporaneously, English surveyor to the crown, Inigo Jones, was distinguishing the stylistic periods of English medieval architecture according to specific formal indicators: those buildings decorated with rounded arches he tagged *Saxon*, while those with pointed arches he identified as *Norman*.[4] By the seventeenth century's end, Roger North classified what today is generally termed Anglo-Norman architecture as *elder Gothick*, thus making the chronological distinction between Romanesque and later Gothic structures.[5] It is of interest to note the diverging approaches even at this early stage of scholarly inquiry surrounding medieval architecture.

Though it is true that the medieval architectural mode did not regain widespread respectability until the mid-eighteenth century, it certainly never disappeared from the English structural landscape. Prime examples of Gothic survivalist structures are the quadrangle-planned colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, some of the few remnants of medieval monastic building following 1536 and Henry VIII's mass dissolution of the monasteries.[6] In addition to survivals are the infrequent

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[3] Conrad Rudolph, "Introduction: A Sense of Loss: An Overview of the Historiography of Romanesque and Gothic Art," in *A Companion to Medieval Art,* ed. Conrad Rudolph, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 1-5.

[4] S. Lang, "The Principles of the Gothic Revival in England," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 25, No. 4, 240-267 (Dec., 1966), 5. The author credits Inigo Jones with not only differentiating *Gothic* from *Italianate*, but in fact for initiating the modern notion of style.

[5] See Rudolph, "A Sense of Loss," 5. It bears some relevance to the question of Gothic's origins to note, as Rudolph does, that terminological differentiation of "elder Gothick" from latter Gothic was first initiated by Roger North in a 1698 publication before its assumption into the French vernacular by Jean-Francois Fèlibien who coined rounded-arched systems *gothique ancienne* and pointed-arched systems *gothique moderne*.

[6] See John Summerson, "Churches and Collegiate Buildings," in *Architecture in Britain, 1530-1830* (London: Yale University Press, 1993), 157-172.

quotations of Gothic from periods with a preference for classically inspired architecture. Royal Surveyor and British architectural hero Sir Christopher Wren's Tom Tower at Christ Church in Oxford is one such instance in which the designer set aside his classicizing inclinations and selected the Gothic for the sake of continuity of design and appropriateness to Christ Church's medieval heritage.[7] We can thus conclude that during the two centuries detaching medieval building in England and its reevaluation and resurrection, Gothic monuments, even before their being described as such, impressed spectators with associations of Britain's unique past, serving as emblems of an older England that remained ever constituent to that nation's identity. Thus it is hardly surprising that in the eighteenth century, once English society (including patrons and builders) turned its eyes upon itself rather than to the Mediterranean and the Palladian treaties on which they had for some time rested, the "Revivalist works employed Gothic as a novel source of inspiration for contemporary design...in [the revival's] search for a new indigenous style as part of a gradually evolving and very self-conscious conception of national identity."[8]

The social and political factors stimulating the demand for artistic (literary as well as architectural) manifestations of past national identity are many and are not germane to this study. However, two currents of thought, that associating medieval architecture with pre-Commonwealth English monarchism, and that proposed by the mid-nineteenth-century Oxford movement are of

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[7] See John Summerson in *Architecture in Britain,* 236. Summerson defends that Tom Tower is neither an example of Gothic survival or revival as it is without question an anomaly in Wren's career. The choice to employ Gothic design was an objective reference to English medieval history as well as a means of aesthetic coherence with the tower's existing late perpendicular base. See also Margaret Whinney, *Wren* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1987), 140-141.

[8] Rudolph, "A Sense of Loss," 13.

interest.[9] The Oxford movement was based on the premise that the Church of England was by historical right an extension of Roman Catholicism, and that a return to the high church practices preceding Henry VIII's disruptive rule was in order. Thus a revival of medieval architecture was a natural adjunct of the motion and with particular regards to ecclesiastical building for which the Gothic became prescriptive.[10]

   Gothic-referent architecture reigned supreme in England throughout the nineteenth century, perpetuated by impassioned writers like Carter and John Ruskin who published his two extensive and moralistic defenses of Gothic reproductions in the latter half of the century, encouraging the erection of a Gothic style church in every parish, a resplendent cathedral in every town so as to emblematize the piety of its sponsoring community.[11] Perhaps the most dogmatic voice of the day was that of A. Welby Pugin, an active supporter of the Anglo-Catholic Movement and a participant in designing the Houses of Parliament. Pugin identified Gothic not as merely a style but an emblem, though not necessarily an emblem of England as in Carter's view. Rather he upheld the Gothic as the true and only appropriate style of the Christian faith, championing with religious fervour the reproduction of medieval aesthetics as well as construction methods in his own century.[12] The Gothic style, then, carried both social and religious associations of English

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[9] Neoclassical architecture was sponsored by the Protectorate of the Commonwealth following the overthrow of the crown in 1651; thus the style could be seen to carry with it political connotations of republican England while Gothic (seen as the antithesis to neo-Palladianism) represented the monarchy as the antithesis government.

[10] See full 19th-century exposition of Gothic as the architecture of the Catholic faith in A. Welby Pugin, *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* (London: John Weale, 1841).

[11] For Ruskin's moral expositions on Gothic reconstructions see *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London: Ballantyne, Hanson and Co., 1900), 32-33, (originally published in 1849), and *The Stones of Venice* (New York: Peter Fenelon Collier and Son: 1900), (originally published in 1853).

[12] In addition to *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture*, see A. Welby Pugin, *Contrasts: or a Parallel Between the Noble Edifices of the Middle Ages and Similar Buildings of*

identity, reflecting English society in the medieval days of chivalry and piety meanwhile linking

that bygone era with Victorian England. At the very heart of this exaltation of Gothic architecture

was the notion—whether engrained in the English subconscious or articulated as propaganda by

voices such as Carter's—of Gothic's "peculiar propriety." There can be no doubt that England's

preoccupation with medieval architecture rested in large part on the sense of national ownership.

But England was hardly the only culture staking claims on the inheritance of the Gothic style

in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, though Britain did set the precedent for a veritable

revival of medieval architecture. Meanwhile on the Continent, Gothic, having been picked up,

dusted off, and cast in a respectable and often even a romantic light, was gaining appeal and

turning other nations' eyes upon there own medieval traditions of building. No longer was the

architecture of the Romans to be privileged over Europe's own creations. As early as 1772,

Goethe's essay *On German Architecture* was boldly lauding Gothic architecture as the visual

conveyor of German ingenuity and unique cultural flavour, the substantiation of German

identity.[13] In France, Gothic revival flourished in the nineteenth century, stimulated by the

circulation of Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris,* which portrayed the great Gothic Cathedral of

Paris as a central character of a romantic narrative, while Viollet-le-Duc advanced scholarly

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the Present Day Showing the Present Decay of Taste (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1898), (originally published in 1836).
[13] Rudolph, "A Sense of Loss," 16. See also Paul Frankl, "The Young Goethe," in *The Gothic: Literary Sources and Interpretations through Eight Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 417-427. Frankl points to an earlier work of Goethe, his essay on Strasbourg Cathedral, *Von deutscher Baukunst,* as responsible for "rousing Gothic from the dead, as far as Germany was concerned."

inquiry with his writings on Gothic structure and its proper restoration.[14] It was also in the early

half of that century that Suger's mid-twelfth-century reconstruction of Saint-Denis was posited as

the Gothic style's accouchement. Interestingly, this conclusion was first put forward not by a

French scholar but rather by a German architect.[15] In England too, hats were occasionally tipped

to France as the rightful progenitor of the Gothic form. Even Ruskin in contrasting his own

nation's medieval buildings with the accomplishments of French builders confessed, "we [the

English] have built like frogs and mice since the thirteenth century...What a contrast between the

pitiful little pigeon-holes which stand for the doors in the east front of Salisbury...and the soaring

arches and kingly crowning of the gates of Abbeville, Rouen, and Rheims, or the rock-hewn piers

of Chartres..."[16] Of course such gallocentric views met with contemptuous rebuttals by those who,

like Carter, felt it slanderous to one's national heritage as an Englishman to look anywhere but his

own landscape for medieval architectural perfection.

   The debates underlying the Gothic Revival in Europe had momentous ramifications for

medieval architectural scholarship. Besides the general enthusiasm for historic monuments and

the societies in which they existed inspiriting the academic field of architectural historiography,

two central debates arose that have essentially shaped and directed the scholarship of the past two

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[14] Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc expounds on his functional theory of Gothic architecture in *Dictionnaire raisoneé de l'architecture français du XI au XVI siècle* (Paris: A. Morel, èditeur, 1846), in 10 volumes.

[15] See Rudolph, "A Sense of Loss," 25. Rudolph makes the interesting observation that the pinpointing of Saint-Denis as the original Gothic structure was the conclusion of a German, architect Franz Mertens, in 1843 even while conflicted national claims were being made on the style in France and Germany.

[16] John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, quoted in Michael T. Davis, "'Sic et Non:' Recent Trends in the Study of Gothic Ecclesiastical Architecture," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians,* Vol. 58, No. 3, Architectural History 1999/2000 (Sept., 1999), 416.

centuries leading up to its present tenor. The first question regards who has the right to claim the Gothic style, and this question involves the search for provenance and direction of influence. The second question asks how Gothic ought to be approached by scholarship, how it is defined or identified. The two strands of inquiry are in fact inextricably linked, for the methodology chosen to approach Gothic architecture as a holistic body (if in fact determined to be such a body) has direct implications for the determining of its nationality, appropriation, or manner of development. The interconnectedness of these issues will be demonstrated practically in the chapters that follow. The present chapter will address the methods architectural historians have implemented since the nineteenth century, allotting particular attention to the theoretical approaches of the modern era and those submitted during the last decades as they relate to or vary from preceding periods' approaches. It will become apparent throughout the course of this study that the two questions hitherto outlined remain central to contemporary inquiry. This is not to accuse the field of stagnation or its methodologies of ineffectiveness. The search for Gothic's origins and nationality has taken a more objective approach and is less a matter of contention than during the emotionally heated, patriotic debates of the Gothic Revival. Also, and I hope that this study will succeed in conveying this point, today's scholarship of medieval architecture is more sophisticated and multi-dimensional than preceding eras, not because it has discarded or replaced traditional theories and methods, but because it has had the privilege of constructing itself on an already established foundation. It remains to be seen, however, whether today's architectural historians have come any nearer to at last providing conclusive answers to the questions of Gothic architecture and its provenance.

Shifting Scholarship: The Developing Discourse of the Last Century

The basic dichotomy that has defined scholarly approaches toward Gothic architecture was

hinted at prematurely in the writings of Inigo Jones, who classified periods of structures with

cultural tags, *Saxon* as opposed to *Norman,* and Roger North, who expressed a sequential linearity

of the architecture, developing from *elder Gothick* to Gothic proper. The same dichotomy has

maintained a perpetual and unavoidable presence in theoretical discourse concerning architectural

analysis to this very day, and might be summarized as simply social analysis versus formal

analysis. But before turning attention to the present day, current scholarship's indebtedness to the

groundbreaking work of scholars of the modern era who set a framework for future dialectic by

going literally to the bare bones of medieval architecture is in order.

Encouraged by the Gothic Revival's demand to understand and reproduce Gothic buildings as

well as by the demand of the international tug-of-war for evidence supporting claims to the style,

nineteenth-century scholars such as Thomas Rickman adopted a method of meticulously analyzing

formal components of buildings. Rickman's extensive survey of English medieval monuments,

Styles of Architecture in England, attempts through methodical observation of structural elements

to classify the periods of architectural development in Anglo-Norman culture within a scientific

framework.[17] His taxonomic terminology has remained in the academic as well as lay vernacular

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[17] Thomas Rickman, *Styles of Architecture in England from the Conquest to the Reformation: with a sketch of the Grecian and Roman Orders* (Oxford: Parker and Co., 1881). Rickman formally categorizes structures according to the following chronological periods: *The First, or Norman Style* (1066-1189), *The Second, or Early English Style* (1199-1272), *The Third, or Decorated Style* (1272-1377), *The Fourth, or Perpendicular Style* (1377-1547), also allowing subcategories for transitional periods between each primary period.

ever since and is not likely to abate.[18] The problematic nature of such rigid, retrospective stylistic categorization has long been recognized by an ever more sensitive scholarship. Although Rickman's terminology remains generally useful for distinguishing buildings related by specific features which link them to a certain stage in formal or stylistic change, the immoderate number of exceptions or buildings that seem to collide the characteristics of various periods exposes the deceptive simplicity of a purely stylistic approach.

The forensic, formal beginnings of architectural history's approach to Gothic architecture was not in any respect a conclusion to the intercultural story of medieval architecture, nor was Rickman's work ever thought conclusive to the question of English Gothic's development. Rather it was a beginning, providing an arena and a vernacular for the proceeding century's scholars to conduct further probing into the remaining questions.[19] Although the formal approach may arguably have held a preeminent position in the twentieth-century academic conversation, it was by no means the sole voice, nor did it remain a unified voice, but diverged to address a range of formal concerns.

As an introduction to his 1976 publication entitled *Gothic Architecture*, Louis Grodecki overviewed the theories and methods devised by his predecessors and colleagues toward the problem of defining Gothic. His summary of the contemporary academic approach to medieval architecture was thus: "present-day definitions of Gothic are based for the most part on technical,

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[18] The total rejection of stylistic classification is proposed by some contemporary scholars such as Marvin Trachtenberg whose theory shall be further discussed in chapter two.
[19] Louis Grodecki, *Gothic Architecture* (Milano: Electra Editrice, 1978), 7. Grodecki describes Paul Fankl's "componential" concept of Gothic as requiring "the kind of analysis indispensable to archeologists" in its forensic formal description of the style.

formal, and spatial observations, as well as on historical and ideological data."[20] The manner in which Grodecki mentions "historical and ideological data" as if afterthoughts following the various structural definitions is a good indicator of the preeminence that formal analysis maintained at that time.

Grodecki attempts to make himself an unbiased evaluator whilst summarizing the myriad of theories and definitions he presents and concludes with his opinion that the best definition of Gothic is the one that incorporates every approach and accounts for each angle, social and technical, toward a holistic portrait of the specific Gothic monument in question. However, Grodecki's commentary reveals the reliance of his definition of Gothic on certain traditional paradigms to the exclusion of newer approaches.   For example, he factually presents the spacial theory put forth by Focillon and Bony who extended it to describe Gothic as something of the happenstantial results of coinciding but contradictory desires for taller structures and thinner walls; also emphasized along with the novel principle of diaphaneity were experiments with the spectatorial, space-defining effects of light.[21] Bony was readily facilitated with support for his premises by Abbot Suger's firsthand records of the reconstruction of Saint-Denis, which project he along with the vast majority of modern art historians pointed to as the successful culmination of Gothic formal features and principles, the locus in which the twelfth-century Île-de-France masons' conflicting desires for dematerialized walls and aggrandized space were finally

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., 10. Godecki quotes Henri Focillon's definition of a building as simply an "interpretation of space."

appeased.[22] Grodecki's conclusive remarks regarding this landmark theory are entirely laudatory.

He concurs "Of all possible ways, it is probably the investigation of light as form and symbol that

leads to the most valid definitions of Gothic space." Furthermore, in response to Bony's stress on

the skeletonization of walls, Grodecki reckons that "walls remain one of the most significant

features of Gothic architecture."[23] Grodecki's generalized conclusions likely met with ready

concurrence at the time of his writing; however he betrays some subtle discrepancies in his own

statement of Gothic as an international movement that "admitted diverse modes, local resistance,

and variants floating against the general current."[24] In pinpointing walls and light as the defining

features of Gothic in its spacial and philosophical dimensions, he automatically assumes a French-

biased perspective that designates (usually) Saint-Denis the formal and ideological precedent for

all subsequent Gothic production. Wall diaphaneity was not necessarily a foregrounding concern

for the builders of English twelfth-and-thirteenth-century structures such as Canterbury Cathedral,

at which hefty Anglo-Norman double-shell walls were selectively employed.[25] Also, the symbolic

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[22] See Jean Bony, *French Gothic Architecture of the 12th and 13th Centuries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 52. Although Bony takes Soissons Cathedral as his starting point in his introduction of the Gothic style, he designates the choir of Saint-Denis as the site at which "These two elements, rib and spaciousness (plus the element of lightness…) became intimately linked in 1140'; and *Abbot Suger, On The Abbey Church of St.-Denis and its Art Treasures,* edited, translated, and annotated by Erwin Panofsky (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946) for English translations of Abbot Suger's memoirs, *De Administratione*, *De Consecratione*, and *Ordinatio.*

[23] Grodecki, *Gothic Architecture*, 12.

[24] Ibid., 97.

[25] Ibid., 99. Canterbury Cathedral's structural makeup shall be discussed at length in chapter 4; however it should be mentioned in relation to Grodecki's comment about walls that the architect responsible for selecting the Romanesque double-shell wall at Canterbury was no other than the French master mason, Guillaume de Sens. Hence even the French insistence on thinned walls may be called to question, though the choice at Canterbury was more likely one of perpetuating the legacy of that particular structure, an argument that has been put forward by Draper among others and shall be further explored. Grodecki himself refers to the double-shell walls used in

or aesthetic qualities of light given so much emphasis by Bony in analyzing French Gothic structures do not weigh in as a primary concern in even that scholar's discussion of the English counterpart.[26]

Not only does Grodecki unearth the deep roots of a French-centered approach to Gothic in his own perception of the style, even while claiming an international outlook. He also intimates an ingrained notion of the Gothic style as the sum of a very particular structural equation. In outlining the structural approach of Viollet-le-Duc whose theory of Gothic as a coherent and consistent structural system rested on the premise that "everything is a function of structure," Grodecki exposes the essential shortcoming of such a tidily systematic approach.[27] Of the countless churches considered Gothic that do not fit neatly into Viollet-le-Duc's system, he says "These are structures whose builders were...unable or unwilling to fully realize the style and who were satisfied with a kind of simplified Gothic."[28] Even in his criticism of the assumption of Gothic's existing on an underlying coherent structural plan, Grodecki betrays just how ingrained is that very notion. To hypothesize that the builders of those Gothic churches which did not correspond to Viollet-le-Duc's structural criteria were intentionally stopping short of full realization is to presume a structural paradigm in the first place of which to fall short, and further to suppose that the builders had a perfectly distinctive concept of this paradigm in mind when they deliberated over how far to pursue the "Gothic style". But might this presumption misleadingly transmit

Canterbury's reconstruction. See also Peter Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 236.
[26] Jean Bony, "French Influences on the Origins of English Gothic Architecture," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* Vol. 12 (1949), 1-15.

[27] Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire raisoneé,* quoted in Grodecki, *Gothic Architecture*, 9.
[28] Grodecki, *Gothic Architecture*, 10.

historians' retrospective analyses and theories of the style we now refer to as Gothic into the minds of medieval builders and patrons, supposing our scholarly paradigms to have functioned as their practical models?[29] Yet Grodecki is hardly anomalous among modern architectural historians for making such presumptions that are so symptomatic of theoretical history.

One final observation from Grodecki's survey of scholarship is his critique and simultaneous reliance upon the componential, evolutionary theory of Gothic, already suggested by early scholars like Rickman as well as later by Frankl and in essence by Bony. The theory presupposes that in chronological fashion, various formal or structural elements from every corner of the European Continent and the British Isles constellated to the result of what was discovered to be a new technical and aesthetic mode of construction. Bony even credits Anglo-Norman England for playing a contributing role in the eventual apotheosis of Gothic in the Île-de-France. One frequently sited contribution is the rib vault that appeared in the late-eleventh-century construction of Durham Cathedral.[30] Yet Bony, asserting that the Gothic not only first materialized in France but there evolved into its highest, most perfected form, follows the systematic geographical adaptation of the evolved style to England, explaining that "the spreading of French characteristics during the second half of the twelfth century can be followed very closely in many details and many parts of England, and the chronology of architectural details is now precise enough to leave

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[29] See Christopher Wilson, "Introduction," in *The Gothic Cathedral: The Architecture of the Great Church, 1130-1150* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1990), 12. Writing little over a decade following Grodecki's publication, Wilson demonstrates wariness toward the post-conceived notion of Gothic as a coherent structural scheme, supporting that "By treating each major design as an exercise in aesthetic and practical problem-solving one can hope to…dispel any impression that designing great churches was normally a matter of realizing an already formed artistic vision...the process must often have become one of precipitate self-revelation."
[30] For further discussion of Durham Catherdal (including the author's commentary on Jean Bony's research of the monument), see Eric Fernie, *The Architecture of Norman England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 131-140.

little doubt as to how these new features were propagated."[31] Echoing this exposition thirty years

later, Grodecki says that while French Gothic architecture is found solidifying into a "coherent

style" in the twelfth century, "other, less decisively Gothic efforts of the same period are to be

found in Normandy and England."[32] Thus, in the evolutionary scheme of Gothic architectural

development, which implies a constant progression from simple, underdeveloped forms toward

improved, more complex plans that were the ultimate goal all along, English Gothic architecture is

made out to be the resourceless and stagnant recipient of leftovers while French Gothic, the

"fittest," developed into an overshadowing presence of perfection.

    Grodecki's summary, then, exposes the underlying premises that much of modern scholarship

with all its divergent approaches seems to have taken for granted in its plight to define Gothic:

French provenance, stylistic or structural coherence, and evolutionary progression from late

Romanesque to High Gothic buildings. It would present a misleadingly one-sided picture though

to exclude mention of the contradictory theories that coincided with these premises and also had

groundbreaking impact on the field. Kimpel and Suckale's investigation, *Die gotische Architektur*

in Frankreich, 1130-1270, published just following Bony's *French Gothic Architecture of the 12th*

and 13th Centuries, directly challenge Bony's explanation of Gothic as a constellation of forms

that, once assembled, continued to cohesively evolve toward higher, ever-improving forms of

Gothic.[33] While fully admitting their view of Gothic Architecture as a "technical phenomenon,"

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[31] Bony, "French Influences," 1.

[32] Grodecki, *Gothic Architecture,* 23.

[33] Dieter Kimpel and Robert Suckale, *Die gotische Architektur in Frankreich, 1130-1270*
(Munich: Hirmer Verlag Münchin, 1985), 120. The authors critique Jean Bony's work *La genèse*
de l'architecture gothique: accident ou nécessité: "Wir halten nicht nur den Tenor siener
Ausführungen, wonach die Gotik das Produkt einer rein zufälligen Konstellation sei, für absurd,
sondern für uns ist die Frage falsch gestellt: die Gotik ist nicht >endstanden< sie wurde gemacht!"

Kimpel and Suckale portray Gothic as a multifarious, dynamic style in which the structural makeup of each individual building was determined, not by a perfect paradigm, but by immediately surrounding political, social, or liturgical circumstances.[34] Inferable from Kimpel and Suckale's pluralistic perspective is that so-called "transitional stages" of Gothic style are in reality not links in the chain to perfection at all, but rather satisfactory, intentionally composed entities in and of themselves, as much entitled to the Gothic label as the most paradigmatic exemplars of High Gothic.[35]

In so challenging the foundational theories of Frankl, Focillon, Bony, and others, Kimpel and Suckale contributed to a dialectic over the methods of defining Gothic architecture that has set the table for the contemporary discourse. Their theory has particularly significant implications in dealing with Gothic in the English context, which is defined by a paradigm-breaking variety of structural forms and frequently by an apparent devolution, or preference for historic models, as shall be thoroughly explored in the coming chapters.

Contemporary Approaches, A Brief Summary

It becomes tempting to espouse the time-biased belief that the current era of Gothic architectural inquiry exists in a separate, more informed realm than that of even two decades past.

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[34] Stephen Murray, Review of *Die gotische Architektur in Frankreich, 1130-1270,* by Dieter Kimpel and Robert Suckale, *Speculum,* Vol. 64, No. 3 (Jul. 1989), 732.

[35] For further discussion of the loaded notion of transitional phases as intrinsically implying a stylistic paradigm, see Marvin Trachtenberg, "Desedimenting time: Gothic column/paradigm shifter."*Anthropology and aesthetics* Res 40 (Autumn 2001).

But it appears that the same questions take centre stage of every conversation, the same

encumbrances prevent unanimous answers. It may be argued, though, that current Gothic

historians have made at least one significant advancement (and surely more than one) in the field,

that is turning a critical eye upon themselves to assess their own reliance on long-established

theories, and questioning whether those theories are still useful or merely inveterate. Michael

Davis's 1999 assessment of modern architectural historiography lays out the premises that have

long been taken for granted but are being called into question by current studies; it is telling of the

field's growing self-criticism that those premises, the legacy of foregoing Gothic historiographers

of the twentieth century, are the very same to which Grodecki, writing twenty years earlier,

inadvertently prescribed, namely gallocentricism, stylistic coherence, and evolutionary

progression of structures.[36] Challenging the past rigidly formal approaches are the current trends

toward interdisciplinary or methodological syncretism (apparent throughout the humanities at

present), a regional outlook, and an interest in medieval cultural consciousness.

   Current publications on English Gothic architecture, including the comprehensive studies by

Peter Draper, Lindy Grant, and Eric Fernie incorporate the first two trends effectively.[37] These

works do not exclude structural analysis or stylistic appropriation from one culture to another;

however, such archaeological or empirical information is interpreted within the social, political,

and religious context of a given region. Davis applauds the multifaceted cultural approach,

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[36] Davis, "Sic et Non," 416. Davis designates the three "general" books that he believes illustrate
the shifting methodology of the past two decades as Jean Bony's *French Gothic Architecture of
the 12th and 13th Centuries* (1983), Dieter Kimple and Robert Suckale's *Die Gotische Architektur
in Frankreich: 1130-1275* (1985), and Christopher Wilson's *The Gothic Cathedral: The
Architecture of the Great Church, 1130-1530* (1990).
[37] Grant in fact writes on Gothic architecture in Normandy, but touches heavily upon the
interconnectedness of the cultures under the Norman duchy, particularly in the area of Norman
construction activity in England.

supporting that these cultural factors are responsible for giving flesh and life to otherwise dead

artefacts of timber and mortar.[38] Efforts of recasting a medieval structure in its original cultural

light are criticized by those scholars still preferring more mensurable methods of analysis on the

grounds that modern historiographers are unequipped to recreate the past, both due to the dearth of

medieval primary sources and inevitable retrospective biases. These claims are not without

reasonable basis, yet those scholars taking a social approach support that what information

historical study can render us ought to be dutifully applied for the sake of fleshing out our

understanding of Gothic structures, even while they resign themselves to the impossibility of ever

reconstructing a complete picture.

The scope if this study is to investigate the particular relevance of an interdisciplinary

approach for furthering understanding of English Gothic ecclesiastical buildings. The first chapter

shall address the current interest in regional studies and wariness of French-favouring theories,

regarding which Davis comments optimistically, "The emergence of new discourses to account for

the Babel of architectural dialects in late medieval Europe may finally force a recognition that the

quest for a unified picture of Gothic style, formerly based on the French paradigm, is neither

possible, meaningful, nor desirable."[39] Such thinking will, of course, bear substantial relevance to

the question of provenance and of England's claim to the Gothic style. Draper's linguistic model

presented in "English with a French Accent: Architectural Franglais in Late Twelfth-Century

England?" insightfully illustrates the socio-political complexities that characterized the

intercultural relationship of England, Normandy and France in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,

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[38] See "'Sic et Non'," 418. Davis specifically refers to the medieval church as a "living
organism."
[39] Ibid., 417.

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thus exposing the faultiness of hastily attributing stylistic influence to France. The social histories by Draper, Grant and Fernie emphasize an awareness of the intricacies of so complex a cultural network.

Chapter two introduces another area of traditional historiography presently under critical examination, namely, the very vernacular of traditional Gothic historiography. Marvin Trachtenberg's proposal for a complete methodological paradigm shift which would essentially replace the semantically misleading term "Gothic" with terms referent to cultural consciousness, "antihistoricism" and "medieval modernism," raises questions about the extent to which scholarship is prepared to abandon old style-based paradigms or if the established vernacular might still play a role in the interdisciplinary realm. Also, Trachtenberg's approach bears implications for English Gothic as it examines cultural consciousness at the national level as connected to and distinct from international consciousness toward discovering how national identity played itself out in the building designs of distinct but associated cultures, namely France and England.

Finally, Chapter three makes an attempt at theoretical application by looking at three ecclesiastical monuments belonging to the English Gothic canon—Canterbury Cathedral, Lincoln Minster, and Salisbury Cathedral. As shall be demonstrated, many of England's medieval churches (the three cathedrals listed not exempt) prove intractable to stylistic approaches due to their formal aberrations when held up against any paradigm; thus they can only be read in the context of their individual histories, patronage and politics. A glimpse at these buildings through the wider lenses gaining ever more frequent prescription by Gothic historians will help in the

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estimation of just how insightful a broader, contextual view is to understanding an individual monument as well as the English Gothic tradition at large.

Might we at last be on the right course toward identifying the English claim to Gothic architecture, or is all of this branching out from the original scholarly roots detaining us from a conclusion? Is the current "Babel" of methodological dialects productive to understanding medieval architecture, or are we distancing ourselves from a common language that would facilitate productive communication? An assessment of current English Gothic scholarship may shed light on these issues. One might argue that the current shifts of approach to regional focus, disciplinary syncretism, and emphasis on social context has loosened the restrictions that past formal codes placed on the study of English Gothic architecture. Free from a French paradigm, a demand for coherence, and a neat linear developmental scheme, English medieval ecclesiastical buildings can be analyzed as entities in and of themselves, within a national tradition, but also belonging to an international conscious movement. Thus in addressing the age-old debate between a social or a formal approach, scholars of English Gothic seem to be suggesting a convergence of both. The following chapters shall put this multidimensional scholarship to the test, as the question of national claim to Gothic is indeed inseparable from the ongoing quest for the best methodology.

CHAPTER 1
ENGLISH GOTHIC IN CONTEXT: SCHOLARS' RECENT READINGS

Matthew Reeve, in prefacing a recent symposium on the issue of "reading" architecture,

expressed what seems to be the general consensus of our current scholars of the Gothic, that

"Within our postmodern paradigm, there is no interpretive path available to get us back to the real

Gothic cathedral as a holistic construct—there is only the possibility of multiple readings."[40] The

statement seems almost one of defeat, as if the voice of the foregoing scholarship was at last

conceding that there is no one formulaic answer to arrive at a tidy definition of Gothic; it is as if

today's architectural historians were making a motion to put away the telescopic lens and in

favour of a panoramic view that will afford perspectives from as many angles as possible.

Testimony to this proclivity toward stepping back from the objectified Gothic structure in order to

view it within its larger cultural context are the socially oriented works of Draper, Grant and

Fernie. All three scholars launch their overviews of Anglo-Norman and English Gothic

architecture from the same social, interdisciplinary premise. Draper pursues the monuments he

studies thematically, in relation to such topics as medieval patronage, masonry, cults of saints and

liturgy. Grant, meanwhile, sets the stage for her architectural investigation with a historical

exposé on the Norman duchy, its socio-political identity in an imperial network. Fernie likewise

constructs a contextual framework by recapitulating half a millennium of western European

history leading up to the Norman Conquest of England; the buildings themselves he categorizes

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[40] Matthew M. Reeve, "Introduction: Reading Gothic Architecture," *Reading Gothic Architecture,* ed. Matthew M. Reeve, 1- 10 (Turnhout: Brepols), 2008.

not by stylistic periods, but according to their social functions. In stepping back so as to behold

the monuments from a more integral viewpoint within their cultural environments, these authors

are careful to avoid digressing into the "unreflective rush to the holistic cathedral, and…an ill-

considered borrowing of fashionable methods from other fields" against which Sauerländer

cautioned in his 1995 introduction to *Artistic Integration in Gothic Buildings*.[41] Rather the three

scholars discuss contextual information in conjunction with formal. Like two chords combined in

a harmonious composition, their social and formal analyses, while distinct, enhance one another

without discord. But while integrating traditional formal analysis, each of the authors also

portrays the current critical consciousness toward past methodological constructs that have

perhaps given rise to narrowing misconceptions of a French paradigm, a coherent and ideal

structural scheme, or linear progressive development of Gothic architecture. All in all, their self-

critical, contextual approach is essentially a unified one; yet evidence to the social approach's

multifaceted nature, each author takes on a particular focus in pursuing the broader topic of the

English Gothic within its socio-political and religious context. The result is a body of

complementary works that contribute to a more dimensional, more comprehensive reading.

Toward explaining this new multifarious mindset it might be useful to clarify precisely what is

meant by a "reading" of architecture in the present scholarly conversation. Reeve's commentary

is once again insightful into the current academic opinion: "the process of reading is only truly

effective when the viewer is able to interpret the signs and syntax of an object in the language in

which the text was written or...the building designed."[42] This notion of reading architecture as a

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[41] Willibald Sauerländer, "Introduction," *Artistic Integration in Gothic Buildings,* ed. by Virginia
Chieffo Raguin, Kathryn Brush, and Peter Draper (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 9.
[42] Reeve, "Preface," 2.

semiotic expression belonging to a larger cultural language is precisely the method taken by

historian-archaeologist Colin Platt who, in the introduction to his 1990 publication of *The*

Architectural History of Medieval Britain: A Social History, prefaces, "Life-styles are my subject,

and buildings are my documents."[43] Thus Platt utilizes his structural case studies as decoding

devices of their historical environments. The scholars discussed in this chapter, in contrast,

demonstrate a preference for applying the environment to the interpretation of the building. Either

way the point remains that Gothic structures have come to be accepted as representing or

manifesting their respective cultural idioms, and not merely the geometric language of the mason

or the iconographic language of the liturgy. Rather a socially manufactured material construction

is now understood as being capable of communicating in any of its culture's dialects, whether that

of the most erudite theologian or even an unlettered lay observer. It is this understanding of

buildings as dialectal that has spurned contemporary scholars to reconstruct the medieval context

in its many facets so as not to overlook any potential reading of a Gothic structure, for the very

notion of "reading" implies a reader, and the orientation of that reader inevitably determines the

interpretation. Regarding the medieval "readers" of architecture, Draper speculates that

contemporaries were more likely preoccupied with an overall tenor of a given building rather than

with scrupulous deciphering of its individual features.[44] The suggestion is yet another argument

for stepping back from objectified Gothic architecture to look at each building's milieu, or, in

keeping with the linguistic metaphor, taking a syntactical rather than typographical approach.

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[43] Colin Platt, *The Architecture of Medieval Britain: A Social History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press: 1990), ix.

[44] Peter Draper, "English with a French Accent: Architectural Franglais in Late Twelfth-Century England?" in *Architecture and Language: Constructing Identity in European Architecture c. 1000-c. 1650*, edited by George Clarke and Paul Crossley, 33 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

In the article "English with a French Accent: Architectural Franglais in Late Twelfth-Century England?"—a theme pertinent to the idea of "reading" architecture—Draper demonstrates the particular applicability of a lexical model for interpreting English Gothic as an idiom of the international language of Gothic as well as a national culture of architecture characterized by its own variety of vernaculars. But more than just employing a linguistic metaphor to discuss intercultural architectural development in the Angevin Empire, Draper hypothesizes an actual parallel between the transfusion and appropriation of language and that of architectural modality. It ought to be observed that such a cross-referencing of disciplines, architectural history and linguistics, typifies the nature of the field's current interdisciplinary scope. But as to Draper's analysis itself, the parallel renders a most insightful picture, primarily of England's self-generated national identity during a period of French cultural and political preeminence. His conclusions are of interest to the criticism of a French Gothic paradigm, a criticism that is repeatedly reiterated in his subsequent comprehensive study of English Gothic.

The crux of Draper's architectural-linguistic parallel consists of comparing the 'insular' French spoken by the general population of Norman England with the contemporaneous development of an Anglo-Norman Gothic architectural vernacular. Draper by no means discounts the obvious evidence of French influence, either linguistically or architecturally. On the contrary, he along with his colleagues Grant and Fernie, provide indisputable historical evidence for the interconnectedness of France, Normandy and England in that epoch, arguing that Norman-English society was intimately aware of the differences between their own culture and that of their prestigious neighbours across the Channel. In both instances of appropriation, linguistic and architectural, Draper demonstrates that while the English were perfectly conscious of the

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discrepancies between their own dialect or their own architecture and the French counterparts, there was no sentiment of inferiority or need for conformity, but rather a keen sense of personal identity. The point is aptly illustrated by the reconstruction of Canterbury Cathedral's east end in the 1170s. Canterbury in all of its multicultural complexity shall be discussed in depth in a later chapter; suffice its reference here to support Draper's claim that "Architecture is perforce a demonstrative art, and since a distinctive manner of Gothic was developed in England and maintained in the face of contrary pressures, common sense, at least, suggests that this architecture was seen as entirely satisfactory in carrying the appropriate connotations and in expressing the requisite degree of pretension."[45] Thus Draper conclusively debunks the myth of English twelfth-century Gothic architecture as the inept imitator or the awkward recipient of French hand-me-downs. He advocates the case of the English medieval patrons who proudly beheld their own architectural artistry as prestigious in its expression of English culture and tradition while also displaying the ability to communicate within the international architectural discourse. It is only in hindsight, Draper argues, that we classify twelfth-century English architecture as a hybrid of Anglo-Norman style and "pure" French Gothic; to the medieval contemporary viewer, be he English or French, a "pure" Gothic style was not a concept.[46]

Besides deconstructing the rigidity of the French paradigm notion, the current scholars devote considerable discussion to the issue of a coherent concept of a Gothic style within England itself. Their research seems to lend itself to a picture of regional idioms, but that picture is anything but resolute, and all attempts at categorization or program explanation are enlightened by socio-political factors. Fernie makes some progress in distinguishing regional groupings of early

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[45] Draper, "English with a French Accent," 34.
[46] Ibid., 33.

twelfth-century churches, finding primarily decorative correspondences between the major abbey

church or cathedral of a given diocese and its subordinate churches; meanwhile he bases his

formal or decorative observations on their relationship to the monastic orders and political patrons,

always bringing to light the complex but intimate social nexus of the Anglo-Norman ruling class

at the time. And though he liberally makes connections to liturgically related institutions in

France and the ensuing stylistic interchange of such relationships, there is nowhere any suggestion

of an intitative structural program being imported from one country to the other.[47]

It is surprising, however, that the Anglo-Norman rulers of the latter twelfth century, many of

whom still lorded land on the Continent, did not elect to implement the most up-to-date

architectural programs that the Île-de-France had to offer, thereby associating themselves with the

prestige of that culture.[48]   In addressing the discrepancies between the Norman duchy's

monumental mode in England and that of the twelfth-century Île-de-France, Grant advises us to

recall that even in that blossoming center of Gothic architecture, so often portrayed as revolving

around Suger and the new choir at Saint-Denis, experimentation and heterogeneity seem the more

evidential characteristics than conformity to a new cohesive formal scheme. And certainly

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[47] See further historical discussion of regional variation and the role of the monastic orders in
Eric Fernie, *The Architecture of Norman England*, chapters 2 and 5; and Draper, *The
Formation of English Gothic*, chapter 4. See also groupings of monastic structures based on
similar ambulatory types in M.F. Hearn, "The Rectangular Ambulatory in English Medieval
Architecture," in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Oct.,
1971), 187-208.
[48] Rodney M. Thomson, "England and the Twelfth-Century Renaissance," *Past & Present*, No.
101 (Nov. 1983), 4. Thomson makes the case that twelfth-century northern France was in fact
more culturally homogenous with England than with the rest of France. See also Draper, *The
Formation of English Gothic*, 238.

medieval France itself was habitat to a vast diversity of provincial building styles.[49] Thus asking

why the Norman patrons of twelfth-century English monuments did not transplant the new

prestigious French program with all its complex interlocking technical parts in order to elevate

their own prestige in the English kingdom is to pose the wrong question. There was simply no

existing componential blueprint for constructing the new architecture, even in the Île-de-France.

In fact, many of the components frequently cited as belonging to the revolutionary technical

consummation at Saint-Denis were employed in Norman England at least half a century before

Suger's reconstruction project. Grant considers the technical elements applied at Durham

Cathedral in the last decade of the eleventh century, which included a skillful though premature

incorporation of rib vaulting and an early form of flying buttress.[50] Yet the combining of these

technical advances was by no means the Norman builders' attempts at defining a new structural

paradigm. And at this point of questioning just what the motives were for such radical

experimentation as we find at Durham and English ecclesiastical architecture of the subsequent

centuries if not the development of a coherent structural program, the socio-political backdrop

becomes invaluable. Durham Cathedral, unrivaled in scale at the time, was the product of the

blitz-like building campaign during the two decades immediately following the Norman Conquest

of Anglo-Saxon England.[51] The wealth and labour invested in immediately reconstructing

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[49] Grant discusses and provides monument examples of architectural variation in Capetian
France in *Architecture and Society in Normandy, 1120-1270* (London: Yale University Press,
2005), 43-49.
[50] Ibid., 36.
[51] Fernie comments about the alacrity of the Norman building campaign, "As for speed, the
Normans had begun the majority of the rebuildings in the twenty years following 1066 and all
of them within fifty years, whereas by contrast, even a century after the arrival of the Gothic
style in the third quarter of the twelfth century, new work consisted largely of the rebuilding of
parts of structures, with only a handful of examples being completely rebuilt." The

practically every Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical monument, both cathedrals and abbeys, in a colossal, imperial fashion suggests that the Norman conquerors' primary occupation was that of making a visual power statement across the English terrain, much more so than patronizing novel design schemes or engineering methods. In this contextual light, the technical advancements employed appear to have served as the strategic means to a political end.[52] That many of the new forms did not emanate throughout England (even the revolutionary rib vault disappearing from the English architectural landscape for several decades) implies that in congruence with Draper's speculation, the propagation of a building's overall effect on its beholders, be it one of Norman power or of Cistercian piety, took precedence over its specific componential makeup.

The question may be asked, though, whether so motivationally unified and geographically expansive a construction campaign as that of the Normans in post-conquest England did not then generate the development of a uniform national style during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Providing a satisfactory answer to that question has proven an impossible undertaking for those scholars embracing a purely stylistic approach. One perplexity previously mentioned is English patrons' apparent disinterest in reproducing the designs of even the most prestigious and innovative reconstructions within their own country. Even the reconstruction of the astonishingly

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observation denotes the Normans' disinterest in reconstructing a French architecture as a holistic construct. It appears that in the twelfth century they rather selected French elements to embellish or technically improve their own pre-established monumental mode. See Fernie, *The Architecture of Norman England,* 24.

[52] It should also be noted that Fernie explains the "technical innovations" at Durham, and namely the rib vault, as culminating a series of preceding experiments in England and elsewhere in Europe rather than the sudden appearance of unprecedented forms. Furthermore, he explains that the immediate legacy or influence of the Durham vaults was much more decorative than structural, evident in that wooden ceilings maintained as much prestige as the vault in the late 11th and early 12th centuries, even winning the preference of Anselm's 1096 construction work on Canterbury Cathedral. Ibid., 36.

modernized east end at Canterbury, a true watershed of English Gothic choir design in its

integration of elements hitherto absent from English formal vocabulary (these shall be brought to

light in chapter three), though celebrated for its novelty was in no way propagated as a paradigm

for later English choirs. The second encumbrance to diagramming formal evolution is the

frequent selection of retrospective, traditional elements even in conjunction with new ones, such

as the Anglo-Saxon motif of interlacing arcades decoratively employed throughout the twelfth

century.[53] The current interest in the social factors behind stylistic choices has illuminated that

these apparent bumps in the road of English Gothic's progressive development are in fact

byproducts of an underlying cultural mentality that emerges once we examine the context of any

individual monument. That mentality might be summarized as a merger of innovation and

continuity. Draper calls the English dedication to tradition at Lincoln Cathedral, maintained in its

highly experimental twelfth-century reconstruction, a "self-reverential" mentality. But not only

was self-reverence confined to the traditions of specific buildings; at the national level, the revival

of rectangular ambulatories in the mid-twelfth century is cited as a movement toward conscious

anglicizing of Norman architecture, replacing the Norman apsidal east end with the traditional

Anglo-Saxon rectangular chevet.[54] But even whilst fully embracing the antithetical psychological

currents complicating the linear picture of English Gothic evolution, the contemporary scholarship

does not shy away from analyzing stylistic change, or even from labeling that change as

progressive in instances. The discourse is merely tempered by an awareness of the autonomy of

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[53] Grant, *Architecture and Society in Normandy*, 2-3. Grant contrasts what she describes as
something of a 12th-century Renaissance in Capetian France (and particularly in Paris) that
produced avante-garde schools of philosophy, theology, as well as artistry and masonry with
the contemporaneous traditionalism of Anglo-Norman England which was well-rooted in
long-established traditions of architecture as well as painting, literature, and other cultural arts.
[54] Hearn, "The Rectangular Ambulatory," 203.

individual structural programs, and of the general precedence given to honoring and embellishing individual institutional tradition above the quest to outdo neighbouring monuments with vogue architectural vocabulary. Thus rather than having to brush anomalous buildings under the rug in effort to create a clean linear development of Gothic, the scholars represented in this chapter grant as much significance to isolated stylistic choices as to those features which were disseminated.[55]

Draper's developmental chronology for English Gothic rests on a socio-political foundation. He designates the first half of the twelfth century as a period of assimilation of the architectural vocabulary introduced in the very visible wake of the Norman Conquest. The following century leading up to 1350 Draper chronicles as a series of individual experiments with continental and traditionally English features that did eventually synthesize into a recognizable insular Gothic much like the insular French to which he parallels it. Though ever heavily heterogeneous, certain modes and features did replace older ones as norms, such as the rib vault and the pointed arch, and variations of those elements, once concretely initiated into the architectural culture, naturally followed. Yet, as the linguistic model illustrated, all experimentation and all appropriation of foreign forms were manipulated into the development of a distinctively English Gothic architecture, ever anchored to that country's long-established cultural traditions even while sharing vocabulary with other cultures' architecture.[56]

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[55] Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, 10. Once again advocating the intentionality of the medieval patron of architecture, Draper makes this cautionary statement to the field of architectural historians: "The solutions that were not taken up and developed may be as interesting as those that were, and, however anomalous the juxtaposition of certain features and motifs may seem to us, as historians we have to be prepared to accept that whatever was built was, at the very least, acceptable to the patrons." The warning illustrates the current shrewdness toward "correcting" formal errors in monuments according to a retrospective style prescriptions.

[56] Draper, *The Formation of the English Gothic*, 10- 11.

Fernie's developmental chronology takes a similar tone to Drapers', pointing to the historical advent of the Normans as a moment of large-scale importation followed by a period of experimentation and an eventual settling into an Anglo-Norman dialect of Gothic. Fernie, however, takes a more sharply formal angle in his survey than do his colleagues. He specifies the formal elements transmitted by the Normans—Carolingian rectangular crypts, a columnar east arm, bastard groin vaults, the centralized nine-bay bishop's chapel—all the while recognizing the liturgical and political motivations behind such formal selections, namely the Normans' ambition to create a landscape across their kingdom that would rival the monumentality of the continental Holy Roman Empire.[57] He subsequently analyzes the manner in which these continental components became adapted into the Anglo-Norman idiom with a sort of catalogue of elements and their monument localities.[58] Thus Fernie appears to pursue the English Gothic, both culture and monuments, from a social-formal approach. In so doing, he seems to incorporate older, established formal methods into his own interdisciplinary methodology. Yet throughout, his method of interpreting formal data in a social light purports to set the text, or the material properties of the monuments, back into the context.

The three scholars' works in discussion, and particularly Fernie's social formalist angle, suggest that the current scholarship has not abandoned the older, archaeological, objectifying approaches of the former era of Gothic historiography. Rather, they demonstrate a tendency to first examine the syntax in order to understand a Gothic building's expressive significance to the medieval reader, only to return to meticulously studying the individual letters in hopes of discovering something about the writer. It is as if today's Gothic architectural historians would

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[57] Fernie, *The Architecture of Norman England*, 32.
[58] Ibid., chapter 8.

like to look through the wide lens as well as the telescope, not one or the other. But it has already been noted and is largely agreed upon in the field that agonizing over formal properties rarely renders a picture of a Gothic structure as the medieval viewer would have beheld it; and in the English context scholars are hard pressed to unearth many webs of formal influence in light of the pervasive traditionalism. Do we then hinder the arrival at a panoramic picture of a Gothic building, or of Gothic architecture as a national or international phenomenon by habitually returning to the archaic stylistic categories? These questions tend toward another element of the interdisciplinary discourse over Gothic architecture, that is the proposal for a complete paradigm shift. Today's self-critical scholarship seems to have approached a cross-roads and is considering whether current methods are the best vehicle toward an accurate portrayal of English Gothic, or if a more radical break with the past is in order.

CHAPTER 2
ENGLISH GOTHIC AND MEDIEVAL MODERNISM

The three scholars of Anglo-Norman architecture surveyed in the previous chapter exemplify

the scholarly tendency to cautiously chart new interdisciplinary territory while maintaining a

foothold on the style-based foundations established by earlier scholarship. In his 1988 review of

recent architectural history publications, Marvin Trachtenberg noted this trend, observing that

"Few architectural historians are radical revisionists or about to become so, and when they do use

revisionism it is generally of a gentler mode, allying contextual methods and the more egalitarian

subject matter with traditional material and approaches."[59] It is ironic that Trachtenberg identifies

himself with this strand of conservative innovators as his proposal, hinted at in the 1988 article

and fully articulated in his later writings, to completely discard the term "Gothic" from

architectural history's lexicon would most always be interpreted as radical revisionism. What

Trachtenberg posited in his later articles was the replacement of "Gothic" (which he blacklists as a

misnomer that remains in the modern glossary due to complacency and has little semantic relation

to the system of structural elements or time period which it typically designates) with the phrase

"medieval modernism."[60]

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[59] Marvin Trachtenberg, "Some Observations on Recent Architectural History," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 70, No. 2 (Jun., 1988), 222.

[60] Trachtenberg first proposed the terminological paradigm shift in "Gothic/Italian 'Gothic': Toward a Redefinition." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (Mar., 1991), 22-37. He fully developed the theory of "medieval Modernism" and applied it to French architecture (including Suger's reconstruction of Saint-Denis) a decade later in "Suger's Miracles, Branner's Bourges: Reflections on 'Gothic Architecture' as Medieval Modernism," *Gesta*, Vol. 39, No. 2, "Robert Branner and the Gothic," (2000), 183-205.

Trachtenberg's theory of medieval modernism, though radical in its terminological substitution, is worthy of attention in this study for various reasons: first, it proposes a drastic shift in the methodology not to mention the lexicon of Gothic architectural history. The argument for discarding a style-period paradigm is a dynamic voice in the ongoing debate to settle on a definition for the observable architectural revolutions of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Secondly, while Trachtenberg tests his theory primarily in the Italian setting and later on French case studies, his proposition of rethinking "Gothic" in terms of medieval modernism (also "antihistoricism") has, if I may venture to say, rational implications for the Anglo-Norman situation, which shall be explored in light of and in relation to current English Gothic scholarship. Finally, stepping back out of the English arena to behold the vast scope of the intercultural Gothic architectural movement, Trachtenberg's redefinition of "Gothic" as a sociological movement, or as a society's attitude toward historicism rather than a distinct formal system may serve as a bridge connecting the islands of varied though coinciding developments of a new architectural mode throughout medieval Europe. Thus we may have arrived one step closer to a consensual means of discussing Gothic architecture as both a national entity and an international phenomenon without tripping over formal discrepancies.

But after considering the many advantages the medieval modernism theory has to offer to current academic discourse, it behooves the student of medieval architecture to tread lightly and critically before allotting a disproportionate weight to this approach over those that have come before and alongside it. This chapter will also consider the case for maintaining the traditional

stylistic methodologies in congruence with Trachtenberg's novel one.[61] The query that such

dialogue naturally raises is whether congruence can actually be achieved between past and current

methodologies in today's multidisciplinary climate, or if a complete break with or total return to

traditional approaches will necessarily ensue. To this matter of uncertainty and tension,

Trachtenberg himself in his 1988 overview assures that while social and interdisciplinary

historiography "has been accompanied by a set of stubborn new problems" the challenge is "not a

generational conflict between 'traditionalists' and 'revisionists' but problems inherent to the

investigation of the external processes of architectural activity."[62] This chapter will investigate

the potential solutions to those inherent problems offered by the medieval modernism theory as

well as the functional relationship between Trachtenberg's methodology and generations-old

stylistic constructs. It shall question what parameters the current scholarship is prepared to

establish concerning a paradigm shift in methodology, and what the implications of such a shift

may be for defining English Gothic in the international milieu.[63]

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[61] Marvin, Trachtenberg, "Suger's Miracles, Branner's Bourges,"189. Trachtenberg concedes that in fact approaching architecture as an expression of cultural consciousness toward historicism is not novel, but is the very lens architectural historians have for some time employed to analyze the Renaissance and modern periods: "the central factor underlying cultural production and reception in the Renaissance and modern periods is seen as a mode of historical consciousness, the period's sense of the relationship of the self, the institution, the community, or a particular discursive formation of the past. The character of such periods hinges on cultural identification with the past or, conversely, on the sense of independence from the past; in other words, the oppositional pair that we know as historicism and modernism." He suggests that such culturally perceived relationships should be pursued in defining the medieval gamut of architecture, and I further posit the relevance of such considerations for English medieval architecture whose character is inextricable from the surrounding society's relationship to its own past traditions.
[62] Trachtenberg, "Some Observations," 212.
[63] Here a distinction needs to be made concerning the reference to "paradigm shift." Trachtenberg's articles deal with the phrase in relation to the historical shift from the Romanesque type or "paradigm" to the Gothic. Primarily, though, he refers to the proposed paradigm shift in historiography practice, from a style-period informed methodology to a cultural-historical

Advantages of a Methodological Shift

    Trachtenberg's pitch for his methodological shift appeals to the current preference for re-

contextualizing medieval buildings, and offers potential solutions to the messiness of the formal

approach. He summarizes the benefits thus:

> The cultural-historical consciousness paradigm permits, indeed fosters,
>
> the explication of conflicted, multilayered works. It encourages us to
>
> see works in anti-hegemonic terms, to see the cathedrals formally as the
>
> complex and even self-contradictory entities that much contemporary
>
> research is in fact proving them to be socially, and to explain that
>
> complexity unburdened by the demands of style, yet within a coherent
>
> view of their general formal character.[64]

 By "cultural-historical consciousness," Trachtenberg refers to the conscious departure of

medieval patrons, masons, and society at large from traditionalism or the status quo; however he

explains that the motivation for newness is in no way exclusive of intentional reference to or even

reverence of the past.[65] In fact, a return to a historic mode can be perceived as modernism in as

much as it catalysts the current into something other or new. The advantage of the approach is

found in the extent to which it may "allow us to develop a reading of medieval architecture not as

stratified horizontally into "Romanesque" and "Gothic" layers at all (which inevitably solicits

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consciousness paradigm. This second and dominant meaning of "paradigm shift" will be the one
referenced in this text.

[64] Marvin Trachtenberg, "Desedimenting Time: Column/Paradigm Shifter," 22-37.

[65] In "Suger's Miracle and Branner's Bourges," 191, Trachtenberg makes this important
distinction between "traditionalism" and "historicism": "By traditionalism I mean the sheer
continuation of practice. Its opposite is not modernism, but simply innovation, or modern-as-
newness (on whatever terms of consciousness)."

stylistic categorization), but vertically, as a continuum of cultural production organized around dominant twin strands of historicist and modernist discourse, distinct yet often entangled in ever-varying relationships."[66] Although this last was written with regards to French Romanesque and Gothic, it may be said with as much relevance to Anglo-Norman and English Gothic architecture. The dynamic between historicism and deliberate modernism in Norman England in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries turns out to be particularly complex as has already been regarded in the previous chapter. Draper's proposition of the self-reverential character of English Gothic buildings, a manifestation of the cultural marriage of innovation with continuity, is further illuminated by Trachtenberg's theory of medieval modernism. The conscientious merger of Norman modernism with Anglo-Saxon traditionalism produced new forms that frequently served as paradigms for later, more intentionally modern structures whose designers may not have even acknowledged the Saxon elements of their models as historical references.[67] By the thirteenth century, as shall be demonstrated by the building of the Angel Choir at Lincoln Cathedral in chapter three, the emphasis was perhaps less on national identity than on the identity of individual institutions, be they monastic orders, cathedrals, or abbeys. Thus we discover a joint desire to venerate a certain structure's past by way of reconstructing it according to modern methods while retaining remnants of its origins, just the situation Trachtenberg demonstrates as the motivation behind the Saint-Denis reconstruction.[68] We shall find this dualism in the construction of the choir and Trinity Chapel at Canterbury Cathedral as well as the reconstruction projects at Lincoln.

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[66] Trachtenberg, "Suger's Miracles, Branner's Bourges," 194.
[67] Norman, or Romanesque architecture is in many ways an intentional referent to classical architecture while also forward thinking, thus embodying within itself a discourse of historicism and antihistoricism.
[68] Trachtenberg, "Suger's Miracle and Branner's Bourges," 195-199.

Understanding the relationship of medieval modernism and historicism proves a helpful complement to the works regarded in chapter one toward explaining the seeming disjunction within English Gothic architecture. Conscious retention of tradition in a sense isolates one region from another, or one monastic order from another, or in many cases, even each abbey or cathedral from all others. Rarely can direct or profuse influence be traced out from even the most renowned building projects of medieval England to other projects. The vast variety of form combinations as well as the confusing threads (or lack thereof) of influence is extremely problematic for a purely formal approach; however once again, approaching the buildings with a preconception of the culture's conscious combining of modernity and tradition to create meaningful and place-specific legacies justifies the intractable variation of design.

Thus Trachtenberg's approach of Gothic as cultural consciousness of self and the extent to which that self identifies with the past removes confusion about the classification of Gothic on several levels. As has been seen, it explains the coexistence of deliberate "antihistoricism" with reverent historicism within any certain building. Thus one can conceive of how the term "Gothic," when viewed as a social mentality rather than a strict style, might refer to the entire period of English building from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (and beyond) without having to explain away the many aberrations in stylistic composition. But returning to the question of nationalism, Trachtenberg's methodology may also provide a means of blanketing the diverse cultural/architectural movements of medieval Europe under a common title. Recall that Trachtenberg has French Gothic in mind when describing the ability of his approach to interpret the "instability and tension between historic and modernist desire...in much the same way that it allows for the complexity of the period of the turn to medieval Modernism—a.k.a. Gothic—in

which the rising tide of modernist desire is rarely unaccompanied by a strain of historicist

consciousness, strongly manifest in certain specific situations and sites."[69] If Gothic can be

broadly applied to signify the response of a culture to historicism and the resultant stylistic forms

and their evolvement over time, then certainly the term is appropriate to cultures on both sides of

the English Channel in the Middle Ages, and elsewhere in Europe. Medieval modernism as a

cultural concept expressed in material forms then links French Gothic and English Gothic together

as a single though culturally segregated movement. It can comfortably deal with the socio-

political connections between Norman-England and France recognized by the authors discussed in

chapter one without resorting to a hegemonic French paradigm. Naturally, it is virtually

impossible to extract the presence of the stylistic manifestations of French Gothic from English

Gothic designs and vice versa; nevertheless, when cultural consciousness rather than formal

properties becomes the lens for comprehension of architectural development among divergent

European societies, each culture's respective attitude to modernism and historicism informs formal

similarities and differences.

Some Objections: How Novel is Trachtenberg's New Approach?

In assessing the novelty of Trachtenberg's approach, the critic may justly ask whether "cultural

consciousness" is not merely a renaming of such primed theories as Paul Frankl's Hegelian wheel

metaphor in which Gothic architecture is but one spoke emanating from the spiritual hub of the

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[69] Ibid., 192.

"Gothic Man."[70] Or perhaps "medieval Modernism" is but a readdressing of Bony's notion of the

generative spirit of modernism that fueled the architectural experimentation of the twelfth

century.[71] It might appear that the more recent scholar has tailored the metaphysical tone of his

predecessors, supplanting terms of an individual's or a culture's spirituality with those of its

psychology or consciousness in order to appeal to a more relative-minded post-modern audience.

Trachtenberg, while lauding Bony's accomplishments in the field, labels his work as anachronistic

and says that the earlier scholar's books "do not belong to today's art-historical atmosphere but to

another age of scholarship."[72] But the distinction between Bony's "spirit of modernity" and

Trachtenberg's "antihistoricism" remains too vague to assert that we have in fact arrived at a new

age of scholarship. Noting the resemblance between his own theory and the older conventional

one, Trachtenberg does argue the case for the novelty of his approach in his first full explanation

of medieval modernism. The subtle but significant distinction that he exposes is Bony's

interpretation of the innovative spirit from an abstract, formal perspective, making formal change

out to be the central focus of medieval societies' anti-traditional energy rather than one expression

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[70] Paul Frankl, *Gothic Architecture*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 298-99. See Section 2.11 entitled "The Root of the Gothic Style." Frankl identifies the "root" of Gothic as "a secret force which provided every sphere of human activity with the spiritual factor, spiritual aim, and the spiritual sense of direction by which all immanent processes converged, by which all spheres remained related to one another, and which created a style common to all cultural spheres." Frankl's proposition appears homologous to Trachtenberg's in its advantageous unifying of formal diversity, albeit Frankl gives a much simpler picture of radial, non-overlapping cultural expressions of the "Gothic spirit" than the complex web of reality lends itself to.

[71] Jean Bony, *French Gothic Architecture of the 12th and 13th Centuries*, 1. Trachtenberg recognizes the concept of the "spirit of modernity" forwarded by Bony's groundbreaking book to have originated with that scholar's instructor, Focillon. See "Suger's Miracle," 3 and 11.

[72] Trachtenberg, "Some Observations," 22-23.

of it. Thus Trachtenberg's designation of architecture as one of the many manifestations of cultural-historical consciousness begins to ally more closely with Frankl's many-spoked wheel; however there is one crucial difference between the two theories. While Frankl's model implies that the many facets, or spokes, of culture, all radiate from the same central cultural spirit, they never converge with one another. Quite contrarily, Trachtenberg's theory seems to portray a medieval culture that is closer to an intricate web than a spoked wheel, in which each thread supports and links the others. Thus, for example, architecture is presumed to influence liturgical practice and vice versa. Specifically, the blending of scholastic and architectural innovation in Trachtenberg's discussion of Suger's writings and his reconstructive program at Saint-Denis prove Trachtenberg's theory to be more convoluted than Frankl's but also more viable, for the threads of a cultural fabric can really only be seen as part of an interlinking pattern, not as isolated entities.[73] Trachtenberg's theory, then, is more full-bodied than Bony's in its grappling with a cultural ideology of "antihistoricism" at large rather than directing it toward an isolated formal revolution, and, in his own words, "far more concrete and motivated, conscious and indeed self-conscious" than previous propositions of a driving "spirit of modernity."[74]

The Terminological Debate: How Stylish Is "Gothic"?

The cultural-historical consciousness paradigm has been demonstrated to offer legitimate advantages to the future of architectural historiography and to be a particularly attractive solution for addressing the English Gothic; it is social by nature of its cultural starting point while still

[73] Trachtenberg, "Suger's Miracle," 195-199.
[74] Ibid., 3.

addressing formal attributes of individual buildings. But does adoption of this methodology

necessarily require rejection of stylistic conventions, and specifically of the term "Gothic" which

Trachtenberg makes culpable for the communication problems that have hindered common

understanding of the architectural phenomenon? Fernie, once again a spokesman for tactfully

merging social and formal methodologies, responded positively toward Trachtenberg's approach,

praising it as a needed and productive contribution to today's dialogue that is often halted by

anomalous buildings that don't comply with conventional stylistic stratification.[75] But while

recognizing the ability of Trachtenberg's "(medieval) historicism" and "(medieval) modernism"

model's ability to illuminate structural analysis contextually where "Romanesque" and "Gothic"

in themselves fall short, Fernie does not support the proposed total retraction of stylistic periods

from the architectural historian's tool box. The argument for the indispensability of style periods

even to the current predominantly social discourse is multifaceted. First, contrary to

Trachtenberg's charge that stylistic approaches are inherently asocial, Fernie asserts the opposite;

'style' seen not as an immutable law akin to the laws of nature to which buildings of a particular

period are forcibly subjected, but rather as an abstract concept pervading a society's consciousness

is in fact complementary to the cultural-consciousness methodology. Furthermore, the presence of

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[75] In "Desedimenting time: Gothic column/paradigm shifter," Trachtenberg illustrates the need to
dispose of stylistic categorizations with the controversy over how to justify the classicized
columns in the otherwise "Gothic" nave at Notre Drame, Paris. Trachtenberg's analysis is based
on the responses of Willibald Sauerländer and John Onians to the columns, both of which he
outlines in his own article. Sauerländer assumes an intention of classical revival behind the
building's design, thus downplaying the distinctly anti-classical character of the rest of the
building. Meanwhile Onians dismisses any possible intention to classicize the columns for
aesthetic reasons (as the building is clearly intended to be a specimen of "Gothic" style), and
supposes them instead to carry a purely theologically symbolic significance. Trachtenberg
attributes the unproductive standstill between the two scholars to the misleading rigidity of
horizontal style stratification.

'style' as a fluid social construct is observable throughout the history of societies to the present day and to an extent quantifiably influences every aspect of cultural behaviour. To this effect, Paul Binski contends for the importance of considering styles "in relation to the human *habitus* as a whole: styles of being, of acting, creating, moving, expressing, thinking and believing." Binski concludes that the "most persistent question is whether, and to what extent, widely held beliefs about the *habitus* can shed light on those things conventionally grouped under style labels such as "Gothic."[76] Conceding that style is in fact a real and recognizable component of social consciousness, the question remains whether the labels "Romanesque" and "Gothic" effectively express that consciousness, or, as Trachtenberg argues, merely distract and encumber our perception of it. In answer to that accusation, Fernie points out that all methodologies and terminologies are subject to misuse, including "historicism" and "modernism" which, relative as they are, are in particular danger of ambiguous interpretation. Such relative, transient terms are only communicative when overlaying concrete, generally (if not perfectly) understood concepts such as the difference between the "Romanesque" and "Gothic" aesthetics. The relative, then, nuances and sharpens the understanding of the stylistic terms, all the while infusing them with the flexibility to reference individual buildings that do not fit into a "pure" stylistic category. "The two sets of terms" Fernie resolves, "historicist and modernist on the one hand, and Romanesque and Gothic on the other, perform complementary functions."[77] Combining a vertical with a

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[76] Paul Binski, *Becket's Crown: Art and Imagination in Gothic England 1170-1300* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), xii.
[77] Fernie, "Medieval Modernism and the Origins of Gothic," 15.

horizontal approach to architectural analysis only yields a more-dimensional perspective, which is precisely what Trachtenberg and the current scholarship aspire to achieve.[78]

Trachtenberg is not the first to recommend a rechristening of post-Romanesque medieval architecture, as was evidenced by John Carter's nationalistic proposal in the nineteenth century, nor is he likely to be the last. But the term "Gothic" has stood the tests of time and trial, even through the most contentious periods of historiography. And "Gothic" has not exactly remained static while historians have accommodatingly tiptoed around it, but has in fact morphed and expanded with the its surrounding scholarship. It goes without contest that the term no longer triggers in anyone's mind pejorative conceptions of a barbarian tribe. It is true that for generations "Gothic" has been the designation for a formal system, hence the common use of such labels as the "Gothic vault" or the "Gothic arch," etcetera. But with the same alacrity with which the meaning-laden term came to accommodate formalist theories in the past century, it has the elasticity to stretch and support new theories such as Trachtenberg's cultural-historical consciousness approach. The lexical revisionist himself wrote of his field "[It] is not a science in which new methods abruptly displace old ones, but a humanistic art that has grown by a process of accretion, with each new method adding to the richness of architectural discourse, with old techniques all the while being expanded and sharpened."[79] So the term "Gothic," its very ambiguity and absurdity proving advantageous by making it more tractable, becomes ever more

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[78] Trachtenberg, "Some Observations," 212. It is noteworthy that in this 1988 publication, Trachtenberg confirms the crucial role that "horizontal" or traditional formal methodologies still play, asserting "Without fresh knowledge of this kind which not only solidifies but brightens the base on which architectural history is built, the discipline runs the risk of atrophy at its roots." The strength of the author's sentiments toward traditional formalism seems to have curbed by his 2001 defense of his new theory ("Desedimenting time"); nevertheless, he does maintain a respectful appreciation of the earlier advances of such pillars of Gothic scholarship as Jean Bony.
[79] Ibid.

refined and multi-dimensional with time, all the while rooting current architectural historians to the foundations of their discipline.

Returning to the question originally posed concerning the extent to which current scholars are prepared to lay down old methodological weapons in favour of new ones when it comes to tackling the Gothic style, they seem to evade the choice all together. Rather, Gothic historians such as Fernie prefer to weld together newer sociological theories with traditional formal methods to produce a double-edged sword. Armed thus, contemporary scholars of English Gothic architecture maintain continuity with the age-old search for explanations of English Gothic's identity and character even while contributing novel insights.

CHAPTER 3
READING THE MONUMENTS: CANTERBURY, LINCOLN, AND SALISBURY

The force of current scholarship's contribution to our understanding of English Gothic cannot be evaluated apart from the power of interpretation of the monuments themselves. This chapter reviews the general readings of three major cathedrals belonging traditionally to the canon of Early English Gothic monuments: Canterbury Cathedral (figs. 1 and 2), Lincoln Minster (figs. 3 and 4), and Salisbury Cathedral (figs. 5 and 6). This overview does not attempt to recapitulate the arguments posed by past or current scholars in their entirety, but to appraise to what extent, if at all, a multi-disciplinary approach and the theory of "Medieval modernism" discussed in the previous chapter has fleshed out the formal knowledge of the structures and advanced the scholarly discourse toward a consensual definition of English Gothic architecture. There is no better test of methodological effectiveness to shed light on its subject than the reflection of the buildings themselves.

Canterbury Cathedral

   No other building program in the history of medieval England, if not all of Europe, has stimulated so great an interest in a contextual reading of architecture than the post-fire of 1174 reconstruction of Canterbury Cathedral. The reasons for contextual intrigue are manifold. The most obvious contributor is scholarship's access to an uncommonly thorough primary source—the account of the monk Gervase who recorded not only his observation of the fire but also of the

transactions between the Christchurch monks and the two successive masons throughout the entire

decade of reconstruction.   Gervase's report enhances the historical narrative surrounding

Canterbury's rebuilding, the circumstances of which can hardly be omitted from a study of the

architecture without maiming formal analysis. The destructive fire followed only four short years

on the heels of the Archbishop Thomas Becket's murder which had resonated shock throughout all

of Christendom. The reconstruction coincided with Becket's canonization, which also had

widespread resonance as the cult of the martyred Saint spread like a wildfire throughout Europe.

These events proved pivotal to the design of the new church.

Form-privileging scholars such as Bony have attempted to fit Canterbury's new east arm (the

general composition and effect of which is frequently presumed to have been influenced by

Suger's choir of Saint-Denis) into the chronological development of Gothic and its importation to

England from France.[80] Canterbury's formal qualities do veritably merit close analysis based on

the choir's unprecedented stylistic and spatial composition, not to mention the unmatched

splendour of the Trinity Chapel that billets the martyr's shrine. But more recent scholarship has

endeavored to bring to light that even the new choir's aesthetics and structure are informed, indeed

are incomprehensible apart from the socio-political context in which they were conceived.

Peter Draper has written a number of articles in addition to his survey of English medieval

architecture that unearth the politics and controversies buried in Canterbury's archaeological

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[80] See Jean Bony, "French Influences on the Origins of English Gothic Architecture," 1-15; and
Paul Binski, *Becket's Crown,* 13. Binski relates the rather complex ties between Thomas Becket
and the Parisian church of Saint-Denis during the archbishop's lifetime, but also after his death.
Many of Becket's posthumous biographers appealed to the association between the lives and the
martyrdom of the two saints, thus incurring the prestige of Saint-Denis for both the English saint
and his shrine.

evidence.[81] Paul Binski's monograph of the cathedral includes extensive allusion to the cult of

Becket and exposes the architecture, particularly the Trinity Chapel, as the practical and symbolic

locum in which "cult sites, pilgrimage and the emulation of the best examples of French Gothic

architecture, as at Saint-Denis and Sens…were reconciled."[82] Gervase's account as well as the

archaeological makeup of the building have aroused an enthusiastic scholarly conversation

regarding the extent to which Canterbury's patrons consciously emulated French Gothic

structures; it has also piqued interest in distinguishing the contributions of the two masons,

William of Sens and his successor William the Englishman.[83] This study does not aim toward an

in-depth review of the various positions or the supporting evidence put forward. Suffice it to state

that the highly polemic context of Canterbury in the third half of the twelfth century has given rise

to conspiracy theories and controversy among historians; but its exploration has also indisputably

shed an elucidating light on the cathedral's architecture.[84]

It might be instructive to return to Draper's linguistic model in considering the political

backdrop of Canterbury's reconstruction or that of any other major abbey rebuilt after the

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[81] M.F. Hearn, *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 76, No. 1 (Mar., 1994), 19. Hearn has recognized Peter Draper as the "first to make the cult setting a consideration in his archaeological reconstruction of a prior design for the eastern termination of the church." See Hearn's first footnote in "Canterbury Cathedral and the Cult of Becket."

[82] Binski, *Becket's Crown*, 19.

[83] The "amicable" but no less discordant tone of the debate, particularly concerning the attribution of the Trinity Chapel's design, is summarized and illustrated by Hearn and Draper's responsive letters to the editor of the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*. See Vol. 57, No. 2 (Jun., 1998), 238-240.

[84] One famous conspiracy theory worth noting is that introduced by – and expanded by Peter Kidson that suggests the fire of 1174 was in fact an act of arson performed by the monks themselves (Kidson suspects Gervase as the agent) for the purpose of justifying the reconstruction of the new east arm that would accommodate the cult of Becket and protect Christchurch's threatened status as a bishopric. The theory accepts Draper's position that the general composition of the Trinity Chapel was part of William of Sens' original design and the monks' intent. See Kidson, "Gervase, Becket, and William of Sens." *Speculum,* Vol. 68, No. 4 (Oct., 1993), 969-991.

conquest. The hegemonic sphere of the Angevin Empire, which incorporated overlapping

political, clerical and scholarly networks, was characteristically cosmopolitan. To the erudite

individuals belonging to these social spheres, most of whom received training in the French

schools and accepted appointments as magistri or clerics in either Anglo-Norman England or

France, there was a fluidity of culture just as there was with language, though certainly a

conscious distinction. Canterbury's famous archbishop himself exemplifies this historical point;

Becket even took asylum in Sens when exiled by Henry II.[85] Earlier patrons of reconstruction

projects at Canterbury had looked to France and Normandy for structural models, Archbishop

Lanfranc borrowing inspiration from Saint-Etienne in Caen in the eleventh century and Prior

Wibert contracting workers from Sens in the earlier twelfth-century reconstruction.[86] It is

interesting to observe, as Lindy Grant does, that the Trinity Chapel was later the source that

acquainted William of Caen, the mason responsible for the Saint-Etienne's twelfth-century choir,

with formal features that William of Sens had imported from northern France to Canterbury.[87]

This sort of common architectural interchange among the distinct cultures within the Angevin

Empire, facilitated by patrons of the cosmopolitan, erudite class, should expel the naïve

assumption that Canterbury's reconstruction is the moment in history in which a more stylish

French Gothic suddenly transpired on English soil. But it would be equally uninformed to deny

the obvious stylistic relationship with not only churches in northern France, but also with the latest

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[85] Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, 14-16.

[86] For a more in-depth discussion of Lanfranc's combining of Anglo-Saxon elements with those
borrowed from Caen, see Fernie, *The Architecture of Norman England*, 104-111.
Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, 16. The preceding reconstructions are significant to
Gervase's account of that of 1174 as he puts tantamount emphasis on retention of the surviving
structure as on the new developments.

[87] Grant, *Architecture and Society in Normandy*, 102-105.

designs of the Île-de-France. In fact, the resultant design at Canterbury was much more complex

than a transposition of Saint-Denis ambience or geometrical configurations from Sens; it was the

culmination of compromises to harmonize continuity of the old structure with cosmopolitan

modernity, all the while facilitating the burgeoning and lucrative cult of Saint Thomas.

   The new east arm of Canterbury, and most especially the opulent Trinity Chapel provides the

perfect testing ground for applying Trachtenberg's theory of "medieval modernism" as a

substitute for purely stylistic designation. Draper in fact cautions against reading the new

structure in terms of Romanesque and Gothic components, an approach that is sure to "impose

anachronistic modes of thought that distort our understanding of the associations and connotations

of the architecture."[88] Those associations and connotations are indeed complex, a coalescence of

early Christian motifs, references to the former celebrated "Glorious Choir," and visual allusion to

the saint himself, all packaged and presented in the most up-to-date fashion.[89] Gervase himself

refers to the new structure's elements in terms of the "old," or those referent to the earlier church,

and the "new."[90] Apparently harmonizing familiar features with new ones, or "historicism" with

"antihistoricism," was a perfectly natural desire to the monks and masons at Canterbury, though

Gervase's account admits to a fair amount of compromising between the two parties, particularly

regarding which remnants of the old walls and foundation to preserve.[91] Binski, recognizing the

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[88] Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, 33.
[89] Gervase reverently refers to the former choir as the "glorious choir." See Charles Cotton, ed., "Of the Burning and Repair of the Church of Canterbury in the year 1174," *From the Latin of Gervase, a Monk of the Priory of Christ Church, Canterbury.*
[90] Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, 18. Draper observes the language Gervase uses to describe the new elements during the construction process, noting that terminology did not yet exist even in France for some of the novel structural forms, such as rib vaults.
[91] See "Of the Burning and Repair of the Church of Canterbury," 8. Gervase expresses the attachment of the monks to the incinerated structure with biblical references: "The Calamities of

sophisticated marriage of modernity and antiquity, points to the Corinthian-style capitals of the

chapel piers as well as the specific chromatic scheme of the chapel's Purbeck marble shafts and

floor stones as conscious allusions to antiquity and classical literature, noting that the monks of

Christchurch saw such exquisite Early Christian motifs as part of their own "sacred heritage."[92]

The coloured stone seems to have been intentionally historicizing on two levels. Primarily, a rich

palette had been an admired feature of the cathedral's former Glorious Choir, and the ethereal

luster of the polished grey-green piers and deep rose coloured floor stones paid it homage. But the

polychromatic stone also adorned the chapel dedicated to the saint, aesthetically elevating the

literally elevated chapel space into the higher realm of being that the martyr had supposedly

achieved.[93] After all, the Trinity Chapel, if not the entire reconstructed cathedral, was intended to

function first and foremost as a sacred memorial; accordingly, continuity and historic reference are

elemental to the space's function as well as its form. Binski has suggested an anagogical

progression of space through which the cult pilgrim could make his way up the nave, past the

liturgical choir, and finally transcend the stairway to arrive in the high-ceilinged, clearstory-

glazed, colourfully luminous chapel as if into heaven's court itself. From thence the penitents

could progress around the open ambulatory reminiscent of that encircling Saint-Denis or enter the

east end's corona which fittingly housed the relic of Saint Thomas's severed skull.[94] The overall

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Canterbury are no less lamentable than those of Jerusalem of old or the tears and lamentations of
Jeremiah."

[92] Binski, *Becket's Crown*, 5. See also Thomson, "England and the Twelfth-Century
Renaissance," 3-21.

[93] For a more specific description of the likenesses between the old choir and the new east arm, see
Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, 25.

[94] For explanatory descriptions of anagogical or anatomical progression through Canterbury's
interior, see Binski, *Becket's Crown*, 11-12.

otherworldly effect achieved by the spaciousness of the chapel along with the elegance of the ambulatory's slender shafts and stained glass clearstory was only possible thanks to the structural innovations that the master mason devised, including advanced buttressing, the odd quinquepartite vaulting of the ambulatory bays and the employment of a French engineering trick referred to as "false bearing."[95] Whether William the Englishman had any hand in designing the Trinity Chapel remains a matter of debate, but he certainly deserves credit for his perfectly capable and inventive execution of what is considered the most "French" portion of the new cathedral.

The recognizably "new" features of Canterbury Cathedral, then, served not to distance the structure from its past, but to hold up the former structure in reverence by continuing its legacy of resplendence. Trachtenberg's theory of compatible historicism and modernism in medieval building does indeed provide a useful perspective; the reconstruction's coalition of historicizing references with novel techniques is visually seamless. Draper summarizes the harmonious effect achieved in the new cathedral, remarking, "The resulting architecture at Canterbury had its own coherence, which embraced potentially conflicting requirements of continuity with the past and the desire for an up-to-date building."[96] The visual coherence recognized by Draper looks like contradiction when placed under a formal magnifying glass; but from a viewpoint of historical context that Gervase helped to facilitate, the modern scholar can, with the monk, regard Canterbury Cathedral as entirely logical and satisfactory, comparable in sophistication to any new architectural invention in France.

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[95] Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, 20-22.
[96] Ibid., 33.

Lincoln Cathedral

The historical circumstances surrounding the reconstruction programs of Lincoln Cathedral are more difficult to decipher than those pertaining to Canterbury. Architectural historians have had to base their conjectures almost entirely on archaeological evidence, as there is no such narrative account as Gervase's memoir describing the various masons and their attributes or their cooperation with the Cathedral's patrons. Even the precise dates of the reconstruction programs (the various sections of the building underwent reconstruction in disjointed stages between the 1190s and 1250s) have been subject to debate.[97] Sparse records and archaeology reveal that the first reconstruction campaign was overseen by Bishop Alexander between 1123 and 1148 and included replacing the nave's wooden ceiling with *au courant* sexpartite stone vaults and elaborating the west façade. After a recorded structural disaster in 1185, Lincoln's east end received reparative attention; in the process, the choir was aggrandized with the construction of a second transept and a polygonal axial chapel reminiscent of traditional *martyria* to house the Cathedral's relics.[98] It can hardly be overlooked that the east end's reconstruction, intended to emphasize the setting of Saint Hugh's shrine at Lincoln, followed so closely on the heels of the new Trinity Chapel and polygonal corona at Canterbury. Indeed, the timing is surely not coincidence so much as competition. But it was not until the 1250s, in the wake of the lavish new

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[97] The early date sometimes ascribed to St Hugh's Choir in the 1190s has been contested due to the advanced technicality of the structure; however in 1911, John Bilson uncovered sufficient archaeological evidence to support the early date, meanwhile contributing a new level of empiricism to the field's methodological practices. See John Baily, "St Hugh's Church at Lincoln," *Architectural History*, Vol. 34 (1991), 1-35.

[98] Peter Kidson argued the chapel's intention of quoting *martyria* in his contribution to the British Archaeological Association Conference in 1986. See Kidson, "St Hugh's Choir," in *Medeival Art and Architecture at Lincoln Cathedral*, British Archaeological Conference Transactions VII (Leeds, 1986), 29-42.

choir at nearby York and the commencement of Henry III's ambitious building of Westminster

Abbey that the Lincoln chapter entirely restructured the east end, demolishing the old apse with its

ambulatory and bays, to include a more spectacular sanctuary for the shrine of Saint Hugh, the

Angel Choir.[99]

Contemporary scholars are not entirely confined to an archaeological debate, though records

are few. Some insight into the motivations for the many reconstruction campaigns as well as some

rationale to the inexplicable coherence of the overall scheme can be gleaned from Lincoln

Minster's context. Namely, the secular cathedral was the largest in the diocese of Canterbury and

had gained international renown as a prestigious scholastic center.[100] Thus the chapter of so long-

standing a cosmopolitan reputation could hardly be long outdone by its rival neighbours who were

exhibiting the innovations of an international architectural style. Nevertheless, the Angel Choir,

while absorbing such elements from Canterbury's celebrated east end as the arrangement of

displaying relics in an axial polygonal chapel, indicates that Lincoln's patrons aimed to outdo their

rivals in extravagance of structural experimentation. All the while, there is, especially in the

decorative details, a distinguishable continuity with the older structure and Anglo-Norman

tradition. Draper, observing this dual nature of the Angel Choir, explains that the structure

> can be understood only as the culmination of three generations of
> building, during which the idiosyncrasies of St Hugh's Choir were
> progressively reworked and reinterpreted. Lincoln provides a
> particularly striking demonstration of a strong sense of continuity in its
> own internal history: a self-referential quality…which needs to be

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[99] Paul Frankl, "Lincoln Cathedral," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (Mar., 1962), 29-37.
[100] Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, 120-128.

recognized if the distinctive qualities of individual buildings are to be

fully appreciated.[101]

Nothing but a staunch, conscious commitment to continuity and a reverence for the institution's

own history could explain the visual coherence of the Cathedral whose total reconstruction

spanned nearly a century, executed by multiple masons under the direction of varying patronage.

The designers of the new choir at Lincoln, made bold by rivalry, pushed their structural

experiments to a new level, even beyond concurrent endeavors in the Île-de-France. However

experimentation never came at the price of aesthetic consistency with the rest of the design. Most

notable among the unconventional masonry ventures are what Frankl termed the "crazy" vaults, an

unprecedented asymmetrical system applied to Saint Hugh's Choir and manipulated so as not to

obfuscate the clearstory.[102] Lighting in the choir was, after all, a necessary element for the effect

created by the polished fossiliferous limestone support shafts and string coursing, another feature

adapted from the Trinity Chapel.[103] Meanwhile, the masons even took the liberty of expanding

upon Anglo-Norman traditional motifs, as with the complex, rhythmic compositions of blind

arcades that adorn the walls throughout the interior. These decorative arcades even in their

varying patterns unify the cathedral's space, at the same time paying homage to the earlier

structure even while improving upon its memory.[104]

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[101] Ibid., 127.

[102] For full exploration of the aberrational vaulting system, see Paul Frankl, "The 'Crazy' Vaults of Lincoln Cathedral," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Jun., 1953), 95-107.

[103] Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, 32 &132; and Bailey, "St Hugh's Choir at Lincoln," 15-16.

[104] For an extensive survey and interpretation of the structural and decorative elements of St Hugh's Choir and the Angel Choir, see Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, 137-145.

Much more could be said about Lincoln's composition in all its "wayward idiosyncrasies" that have baffled architectural historians for generations.[105] The Cathedral's precocious experimentations merged with traditional motifs has been in the past a wrench thrown into the spokes of formalist scholars' analyses, as illustrated by the dialogue between Robert Willis who charged Lincoln's architecture as being "the work of a mad Frenchman," and Viollet-le-Duc who contradictorily asserted that the ornamentation and execution could only be attributed to an English mason.[106] Clearly Lincoln, by its very nature, does not easily comply with strict stylistic developmental schemes as it is both retrospective and, by appearance of its structural composition, advanced. Its influence on subsequent English cathedral programs in the Gothic style is impossible to quantify as few of its more inventive innovations, such as the "crazy" vaults, were directly imitated, though many of its forms, including rather advanced flying buttresses, were modified and adapted to future buildings.[107] What modern scholarship has contributed to the understanding of Lincoln's architecture (which has long proven problematic due to the interludes in its construction and its retention of the Anglo-Norman building's properties) is the realization that the cathedral can only be comprehended as an autonomous achievement that prioritizes the display of its own identity even while adapting elements from other monuments to suit that identity. While archaeological investigation continues to be informative, Lincoln is only legible when forensic data is read in terms of (to employ Trachtenberg's phraseology) a "culturally conscious" marriage of continuity with modernity, or conscious self-reverence with

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[105] Ibid., 144.

[106] Quoted in G.G. Scott, "Some Notes of an Examination of the Architecture of the Choir of Lincoln Cathedral, with a View to Determine the Chronology of St Hugh's Work," *Associated Architectural Societies Report and Papers*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (1873), 186-193. See also quotation of Viollet-le-Duc in Draper, *Formation of English Gothic*, 144.

[107] Kidson, "St Hugh's Choir," 30-31. See also Draper, *Formation of English Gothic*, 145.

"antihistoricism." Only then does the rationality of the structure become as surprisingly coherent as its visual impression.

Salisbury Cathedral

Salisbury Cathedral's construction campaign in 1220 differs from most contemporary building enterprises of great churches in twelfth and thirteenth-century England in one significant aspect— it was a *construction*, not a *reconstruction* as at Canterbury, Lincoln and a host of other Anglo-Norman ecclesiastical centers.[108] Approaching the structure from a purely style-based mentality, one would expect to find at Salisbury a total departure from out-dated, traditional modes of English cathedral building. Indeed, if ever there were a propitious moment in the thirteenth century for a great church's patrons to distinguish their establishment from its competitors by capitalizing on the very latest French cathedral designs, it was bestowed to Bishop Richard Poore of Salisbury. There were no preexisting building foundations, no responsibility to continuity with an older structure to dictate the new cathedral's architectural parameters. Considering the liberty of design left to the new cathedral's masons, what we find at the completed Salisbury is a true puzzlement—a completely novel arrangement of liturgical space, presented in the most elegant and structurally modern manner, but overall contained within forms entirely familiar to Anglo-Norman tradition. A purely formal methodology cannot provide a full explanation for the

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[108] Peter Draper, "Salisbury Cathedral: Paradigm or Maverick?" in *Medieval Art and Architecture at Salisbury Cathedral,* ed. Laurence Keen and Thomas Cocke (Leeds: W.S. Maney and Son Limited, 1996), 21-31. The author cautions against the tendency to take Salisbury as a paradigm of Early English Gothic merely on the fact of its having been constructed *di novo*, without a need to adapt to the plan or design of an earlier structure.

resultant structural composition. Rather, the formal purist must dismiss the oddity of the

unprecedented reinterpretation of a traditional plan as a happenstantial experimental gathering of

elements that resulted in a paradigm for early English Gothic cathedrals. Draper captures

Salisbury's resistance to being made a puzzle piece in a simple stylistic framework in claiming

"The cathedral may be described as a paradigm in terms of its liturgical arrangement but

architecturally remains a maverick."[109]

  Recent scholarship, illuminating the elaborate socio-political context that motivated the

choices of the new cathedral's patrons, has consequently shed light on its unprecedented form. In

a political as well as an architectural sense, building Salisbury Cathedral from its foundations

upward on a new plot of land was an act of self-emancipation. In requesting to transfer the see

from its primary location at Old Sarum, Bishop Herbert Poore (Richard's brother and predecessor)

was merely carrying out the long-standing desire of the canonical community to be removed from

Sarum Castle where the ecclesiastical community had endured decades of conflict with the

confining secular authorities.[110] While the aspiration to regain autonomy was a catalyst in setting

the new construction project in motion, another contextual factor bears significantly on the

specific architectural choices of the patrons and masons, namely the liturgical impact of the fourth

Lateran Council of 1215 at which the doctrine of transubstantiation was sanctioned as official

Church doctrine.[111] The basic implication of the sanction was a higher status for the priesthood

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[109] Ibid., 30.
[110] Pamela Z. Blum. "The Sequence of the Building Campaigns at Salisbury," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 73, No. 1 (Mar., 1991), 6-38.
[111] For a full exploration of the architectural impact of the fourth Lateran Council, see Virginia Jansen, "Salisbury Cathedral and the Episcopal Style in the Early 13th Century," in *Medieval Art and Architecture at Salisbury Cathedral,* ed. Laurence Keen and Thomas Cocke (Leeds: W.S. Maney and Son Limited, 1996), 32-39.

administering the Eucharist, and therefore a more distinct separation between the clergy and the laity. The material consequence of the doctrine naturally manifested itself in architecture in the manner of a defined spatial separation between the laity in the nave and the clerics performing the mysterious sacrament of the Mass in the choir, achieved in most churches with the addition of chancels and screens.

As a side note with relevance to architectural historiography, scholarly interest in analyzing space in relation to liturgical function peaked during the Gothic Revival (and concurrent ecclesiology movement), and involved the concerted research of liturgists and archaeologists alike.[112] Though interest in the approach lost steam during the style-dominated discourse of the twentieth century, liturgical practice has recently been once again picked up as an instructive source, though modern scholars recognize its limits. In considering the evident widespread repercussions of the new liturgy on architecture throughout the Norman duchy and France, Grant is quick to preface that a church's design was seldom if ever mandated by liturgical practice, and in fact a broad scope of variation was permitted in the arrangement of sacristy space.[113] Draper concurs, demonstrating the point with cases in which practicality was sacrificed for the sake of formality.[114] Nevertheless, the medieval church was first and foremost a functional environment; thus clerical patrons were indubitably sensitive to the practical demands of reformed liturgy.

Nowhere is that sensitivity more visibly manifest than at Salisbury, and for good reason. Before his accession as Bishop of Salisbury, Richard Poore had studied and taught theology in the discipline's undisputed fulcrum at the time, Paris, and had also served as a papal judiciary on

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[112] Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, 197-198.
[113] Grant, *Architecture and Society in Normandy*, 223-224.
[114] Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, 198.

various occasions. Upon his return in 1217, Poore actively propagated the reformed liturgy in

England as a regional synod.[115] It is no wonder then that suitable accommodation of the liturgy

was forefront among Bishop Richard's priorities in planning the new cathedral. And the

timeliness of the construction's commencement in 1220, a mere five years following the papal

sanction, gave the builders of Salisbury the rare advantage of designing the structure with

reformed liturgy in mind.

But it remains to be noted how consciousness of liturgical function played itself out

compositionally. Primarily it is the complexity of the division of clerical space that makes the

cathedral's choir so remarkable. Salisbury's east end has the compartmentalized complexity of a

beehive and was designed to serve a number of dynamic purposes, accommodating not only the

Mass but also the festal processions of the liturgical calendar.[116] Thus the east arm is both

emblematic of and practically suited for reformed liturgy. The presbytery and liturgical choir

comprise the innermost interior of the space, segregated from the nave by gated screens. An

eastern transept in addition to the primary one gives the impression that the clergy are in fact

confined in a separate but complete church of their own in which to attend to the miracle of

transubstantiation. Even the various festal altars throughout the ambulatory are partitioned into

individual subspaces. The structural orchestration of the ambulatory is both avant-garde and

technically and aesthetically impressive. Frankl even commented that even in his own time, the

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[115] Jansen, "Salisbury Cathedral and the Episcopal Style," 35.
[116] For description of the east arm's function in relation to liturgical processions, see Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, 207-208.

illusion of the heavy vaults being suspended by slender shafts in the ambulatory "strike[s] one as a miracle."[117]

An extraordinary twist to the advanced technical achievements and sophisticated organization of clerical chambers at Salisbury is the conventionality in which the whole east end is packaged. The necessary lengthening out of the liturgical space is in perfect keeping with the traditional Anglo-Norman preference for horizontality in contrast to the French insistence on verticality, a preference that remained characteristic of English Gothic.[118] Furthermore, the cathedral's builders effectively adapted a hallmark of Anglo-Norman (and pre-conquest Anglo-Saxon) ecclesiastical architecture—a rectangular ambulatory—by which the rectangular axial Lady Chapel is accessed.[119] In evoking such traditional modes of English cathedral construction, Salisbury Cathedral asserts the historical authority of which Old Sarum had been deprived. In so comprehensively embracing reformed liturgy in Salisbury's architecture, Bishop Richard incurred the authority of the theologically erudite of the Île-de-France as well as the papacy itself, sovereignties that not even the king of England or his overlords could contest. Aside from political and religious prestige attained, Salisbury Cathedral made a name for itself in architectural history in setting a precedent for coordinating the liturgy within architectural space. But even in the conscious modernism that constituted the cathedral's influence, Salisbury displays a commitment to regional historicism even while boldly pioneering new architectural territory. Thus once again, this monument that has held so prominent a place as a precedent for early English Gothic great churches throughout the centuries of Gothic architectural scholarship is

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[117] Paul Frankl, *Gothic Architecture*, 124.

[118] Ibid., 123. Frankl employs the concurrent constructions of Amien and Salisbury to illustrate the divergent preferences of French and English Gothic builders.

[119] Hearn, "The Rectangular Ambulatory in English Medieval Architecture," 207.

coming into new light. The explanations provided by the socio-political and liturgical

environment not only rationalize the complexity and novelty of the cathedral's design; but

furthermore the context invests the structure with historical life, for the space was intended from

the start to breath and pulsate with sacred activity, to accommodate divine mystery, and to allow

its inhabitants to transcend into a beatific realm, all the while keeping their feet planted proudly

and firmly on the pavement of a monument that visibly manifested their English heritage.

    From the Gothic Revival to the present, literally volumes have been published analyzing the

three monuments discussed here. Thus Canterbury, Lincoln and Salisbury have been scrutinized

from numerous angles, approached from dozens of methodological perspectives. It has not been

the intention of this brief overview to give voice to foregoing formal or stylistic arguments, but

neither is it the purpose to understate those methodologies in presenting the current multi-

discipline perspective. Those scholars who interrogated the formal properties of these and other

medieval ecclesiastical structures in an effort to determine each one's place in the development of

the English Gothic style lay the essential, material groundwork on which today's scholars are

building contextually. Indeed, early interest in the buildings' formal properties raised questions

that scholars are currently exploring, such as the conundrum of the choice to recall the Anglo-

Saxon rectangular ambulatory in the entirely new, unfettered cathedral at Salisbury. In so doing,

past inquiries have opened up new paths by which to approach the monuments from innovative

angles. In the course of exploring these contextual paths, scholars have exposed the deep and

controversial political undercurrents of Canterbury's new choir, the vying ambitions at Lincoln

that motivated radical experiments, and the liturgical sanctions that determined Salisbury's complex spacial composition. In addition to the interpretations provided by socio-political or liturgical approaches (which have also clarified the international context), sociological methods such as Trachtenberg's "antihistorcism" theory prove complementary and particularly helpful toward making sense of builders' conflicting decisions to retain English tradition while pursuing cosmopolitan modernity. The three monuments reviewed illustrate that paradox, which Trachtenberg has exposed as elemental to Gothic in France and Italy, as also fundamental to the conception of the new style in medieval England. In short, as scholars build layer upon layer of contextual structure on the long-established formal foundations, the historical shape of the English Gothic great church, and even the shape of those very foundations becomes ever more discernible, ever grander, and arguably ever more interesting.

CONCLUSION

In his cogitative work published in 1962, *Gothic Architecture*, Paul Frankl addressed the frequently drawn comparison between the concurrently constructed cathedrals of Salisbury and Amiens, the one representative of English Gothic horizontality, the other displaying quintessential French verticality. Frankl's comments disparage the art historian's erecting the two structures as illustrative of their respective nation's character, warning, "it is not permissible to attribute to nations immutable characters. Nations changed, and the Gothic style changed. How these changes are interconnected is obscure, and the obscurity only becomes deeper if one tries to name the unknown root race. The Gothic style" Frankl concludes, "is a spiritual problem, common to Normans, Frenchmen, and Englishmen."[120] It is noteworthy that Frankl, writing in the mid-twentieth century, was setting precedents by looking beyond a cathedral's formal components for its interpretable meaning. But regarding the two primary inquiries dealt with in this study—how to determine the best methodology for examining the Gothic style and how to define English Gothic as pertaining to that style on both a national and international level—Frankl's existential explanation dishearteningly throws material answers out of scholarship's reach. If "style" is in essence a "spiritual problem," how is to be approached, analyzed, or discussed in aesthetic terms? Furthermore, if style's development is, as Frankl posits, "an intellectual process overriding national characteristics and individual artists," have all efforts at national differentiation of the Gothic style,

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[120] Paul Frankl, 124.

from the Gothic Revival to current publications on regional studies, been misguided and futile?[121]

As the forerunning chapters have demonstrated, the current camp of architectural historians has in

no way conceded to the impossibility of supplying answers to the enigmatic thing that is the Gothic

style. Rather they have enlarged their methodological arsenal with a range of interdisciplinary

approaches and have risen to the challenge of reining in the abstract mysteries of the Gothic style

and bringing it down to earth and into the realm of both formal and social conversation. As

evidenced in the previous chapter, contemporary English Gothic historians are not content to leave

Salisbury Cathedral under a telescope, but neither are they prepared to shroud the obvious

"Englishness" of the building's aesthetics under a hazy, abstract universal explanation. They

regard Bony's tidy systematic explanation of formal propagation as overly simplistic while

Frankl's "spiritual problem" theory is impractical.[122] Certainly Frankl's existential theory of style

may add another dimension to the body of approaches, but not to the exclusion of other more

empirically based approaches. Today's scholars seek a "junction between terrestrial and celestial"

in their readings of Gothic architecture, a middle ground between the cathedral's forensic

foundations and her supernal spires.[123]

In pursuing more comprehensible, consensual answers to the field's age-old questions, today's

scholars of the Gothic style have had to grapple once again with even the most rudimentary

[121] Paul Frankl, *The Principles of Architectural History*, 3, quoted in Paul Crossley, "Frankl's Text: Its Achievement and Significance," in *Gothic Architecture*, by Paul Frankl, 7-31 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 13.
[122] See Bony, *French Gothic Architecture of the 12th and 13th Centuries*, 1. Bony asserts that "the spreading of French characteristics during the second half of the 12th century can be followed very closely in many details and many parts of England, and the chronology of architectural details is now precise enough to leave little doubt as to how these new features were propagated."
[123] Paul Crossley, "Medieval Architecture and Meaning: The Limits of Iconography," *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 130, No. 1019 Special issue on English Gothic art, 116-121 (Feb., 1988), 121.

premises, namely the definition of *style*, before dealing with its varying period or geographical

expressions. This issue is a pivotal point of the shift in scholarship. Paul Crossley's introduction

to the recent republication of *Gothic Architecture* elucidates the essential theoretical disparity

between that notion of style held by Frankl and many foundational scholars of *Kunstwissenschaft*

and that generally accepted by postmodern scholars. There is today a general consensus of style as

a descriptive mode of categorizing structures with like characteristics, a post-construct that "does

not correspond to any 'thing' or 'essence' in reality;" quite contrarily, nineteenth-century scholars

such as Frankl perceived style to be "a real, active entity- a powerful and objectively existing

fact."[124] According to Frankl's Hegelian concept, style is a pervasive spirit that governs societies,

superceding national consciousness. Regarding the national variations of the Gothic style, and

particularly the visible divergence between French and English Gothic, Frankl reinforces that "the

explanation lies in intellectual or spiritual reasons common to those who dwell together all their

lives."[125] This explanation is not only abstract, but it also disables further discovery and further

explanation. The ironic consequence of actualizing "style" has been to remove it from factual

discourse. While a stringently formalist view of style limits understanding the complexities of

Gothic, a purely philosophical view makes comprehension inaccessible.

   Current scholarly voices in the English Gothic confabulation beg to differ with the explanation

of style as "an intellectual process overriding national characteristics and individual artists." This

definition that suggests medieval patrons and masons were not generators of style but merely

subconscious executors of its force is diametrically contrary to Trachtenberg's cultural

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[124] Paul Crossley, "Frankl's Text: Its Achievement and Significance," in *Gothic Architecture*, by
Paul Frankl (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 7-31.
[125] Paul Frankl, *The Gothic*, *Literary Sources and Interpretations through Eight Centuries*.
(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 685.

consciousness theory as well as Draper's linguistic analog that demonstrates the "idiosyncratic manner of architecture in England" and distinction from French models "to some extent consciously fostered and pursued with purpose."[126] While Trachtenberg and Draper argue medieval builders' consciousness of geographically divergent style, Binski reminds today's Gothic analysts to involve their eyes in the analytical process as "the study of appearances in relation to social existence, of 'form' generally, is of real consequence and capable of practical historical demonstration."[127] And, as reviewed in chapter two, Fernie stresses the ongoing relevance of style to the academic discourse, for "If styles are treated as fluid parts of normal human discourse and behaviour, there is no justification for denying them."[128] These scholars are really only bringing the obvious to light—the Gothic style, in all its mystery, controversy, and variety, clearly exists as an aesthetically distinguishable form or ambience, and within it there are nationally distinguishable variations. Medieval observers such as Gervase recognized its novelty, the clamouring nationalists of the Gothic Revival were certainly quick to point out the peculiar form it took in their particular culture, and in the present day, scholars and laymen alike can brand a Gothic building with one glance and even discern between one that is English Gothic and another that is French.

Contemporary scholarly publications, then, maintain the undeniable existence of the Gothic style (and English Gothic as distinct within it), and even retained the styles contested terminological designation. As Stephen Murray acknowledges in his 2004 entry on Gothic architecture in the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, "'Gothic' has stuck. Indeed with its power to collapse time, linking form with alleged function and ethnic roots, this epithet powerfully (if

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[126] Peter Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, 235.
[127] Paul Binski, *Becket's Crown*, xii.
[128] Fernie, "Medieval Modernism and the Origins of Gothic," 14.

allegorically) conveys essential aspects of the phenomenon described."[129] Reeve also asserts the

truly remarkable accomplishment of Gothic as a historically recognized phenomenon having

endured the test of time, maintaining its status as "a pervasive architectural idiom that not only has

a weighty historiographical tradition but can also sustain critical and theoretically diverse

interpretive pressures."[130] Continuity with the foundations of the field, be they terminological or

methodological, is also a credit to an expanding Gothic scholarship. There is truth to Crossley's

statement "Each age builds its own Gothic cathedral," but even while reshaping the architecture in

a sense, the current age of scholars still relies on the cornerstones laid by its predecessors. There

is still a need for the student of Gothic architecture to be well versed in the style's traditional,

formal lexicon if the conversation is to be furthered, even if that conversation challenges the very

terms on which it is contingent as is the case in Trachtenberg's proposal to substitute "Gothic"

with "medieval modernism." The thrust of today's interdisciplinary climate is not so much

methodological reform as expansion, not the demolition of past theories, but an addition of new

perspectives. A pluralistic scholarship, accepting that there is no single correct methodology, is

producing a perspective of Gothic architecture that is, if not consensual, more dimensional, more

corporeal than the bare boned definitions of the past. All the while, rooted to Gothic

historiography's formal beginnings, architectural historians are finding the liberty of branching out

while knowing themselves to belong to a common trunk. The benefits of such a freedom of

academic exploration is articulated by Davis who observes, "By disregarding the 'border police'

of existing conceptual frameworks and traditional methods or disciplines, these new perspectives

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[129] Stephen Murray, "Gothic Architecture," in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. Joseph R. Strayer, 217-235 (New York: Scribner, c1982-1989), 219.
[130] Reeves "Reading Gothic Architecture," 1.

challenge, revise, and energize our understanding of these magical buildings."[131] The panoramic

view of a Gothic monument by such judgment could only be advantageous, not toward supplying

a precise definition, but in fleshing out our existing concept of the indefinable but no less

recognizable Gothic style.

   The English Gothic cathedral in particular, as the previous chapter certifies, has certainly

gained dimension from historiographical contextualization since the days of Rickman's formal

classification system. The historical narrative of which Canterbury Cathedral assumes a central

role possesses romance and intrigue enough to rival Notre Dame's role in the fictional tale of the

Hunchback. Canterbury is but one example of the dynamic relationship between a monument and

its context, be it socio-political or liturgical as played so heavily upon Salisbury Cathedral's

makeup. The power of enlightenment is two-way, the monument serving as a surviving document

of its original environment while that historical environment is the syntactic key that makes the

monument legible. Thus a broader contextual viewpoint has made it clear just how crucial are the

immediate context and specific history of any ecclesiastical structure to its formal explanation, as

Gervase's frequent adulations of the "glorious choir" and Lincoln Cathedral's Anglo-Saxon décor

attest. But all monumental self-reverence taken into account, English Gothic unmistakably

belongs to the international phenomenon that we call the Gothic style. Is English Gothic, then, the

equivalent of Gerstenberg's *Sondergotik* or "particularistic Gothic" in an English context?[132] This

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[131] Davis, "Sic et Non," 422.

[132] Kurt Gerstenberg, *Deutsche Sondergotik, Eine Untersuchung über das Wesen der deutschen Baukunst im Mittelalter* (Munich, 1913), 19, quoted in Frankl, *The Gothic*, 681. Gerstenberg's translated definition of "particularistic Gothic" (as he applies it to German Gothic) is as follows: "the architectural style that makes free, creative use of inherited forms and, having completely emancipated itself from French tradition, develops under the domination of the specifically German feeling for form."

is not necessarily the case, as English Gothic did not follow a trend of emancipation from French influence. Certain monuments throughout the period of Gothic construction, such as Canterbury and Westminster Abbey nearly a century later, consciously displayed an aesthetic connection with France while others betrayed their patrons' preference for showcasing traditional Anglo-Norman features. For this reason among others, English Gothic is best approached case by case where an in-depth formal explanation is desired. But how ought English Gothic architecture to be reckoned with as a nationally style-unified body? Trachtenberg's theoretical principle of coexistent antihistoricism and historicism goes a long way in accounting for the characteristic marriage of tradition and modernity in the English Gothic cathedral, but his concepts are generalized. John Carter's suggestion of describing the architecture as simply "English" is not without reason as the aesthetic of a medieval English cathedral is recognizably particular to that culture, reverently built on English historical tradition and by predominantly English ingenuity. But denying the obvious relationship of English medieval architecture to its Continental neighbours is to deprive it of an essential aspect. With current scholars' acceptance of English Gothic as just that, both a continuation of national tradition and propagation of the international style of Gothic, the monuments of medieval England are benefiting from monographs and regional studies as well as methodologies pertaining to the style at large. As horizons broaden to Gothic scholarship, literacy of English Gothic improves. The English Gothic cathedral shall forever retain an element of mystery as it surely did even for those who constructed it; but even the aspect of that mystery's sublime nature that is particular to medieval England is likely to become only more appreciable

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with access to those daring to learn the contextual language explored by today's English Gothic

historians, for "the process of reading Gothic architecture has only just begun."[133]

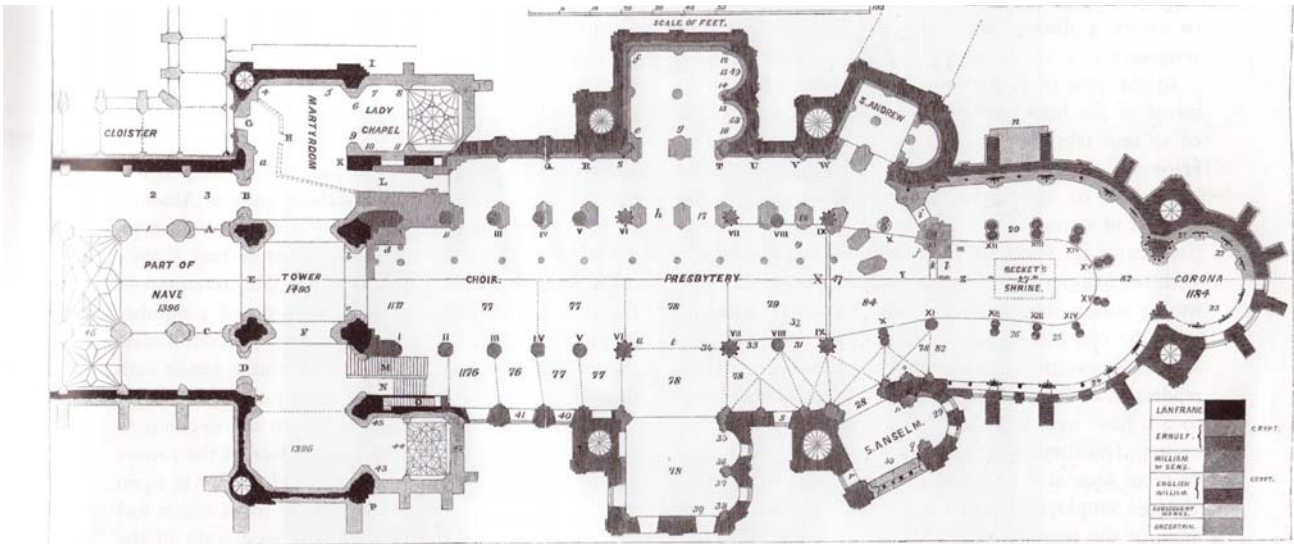[133] Reeve, "Reading Gothic Architecture," 2.

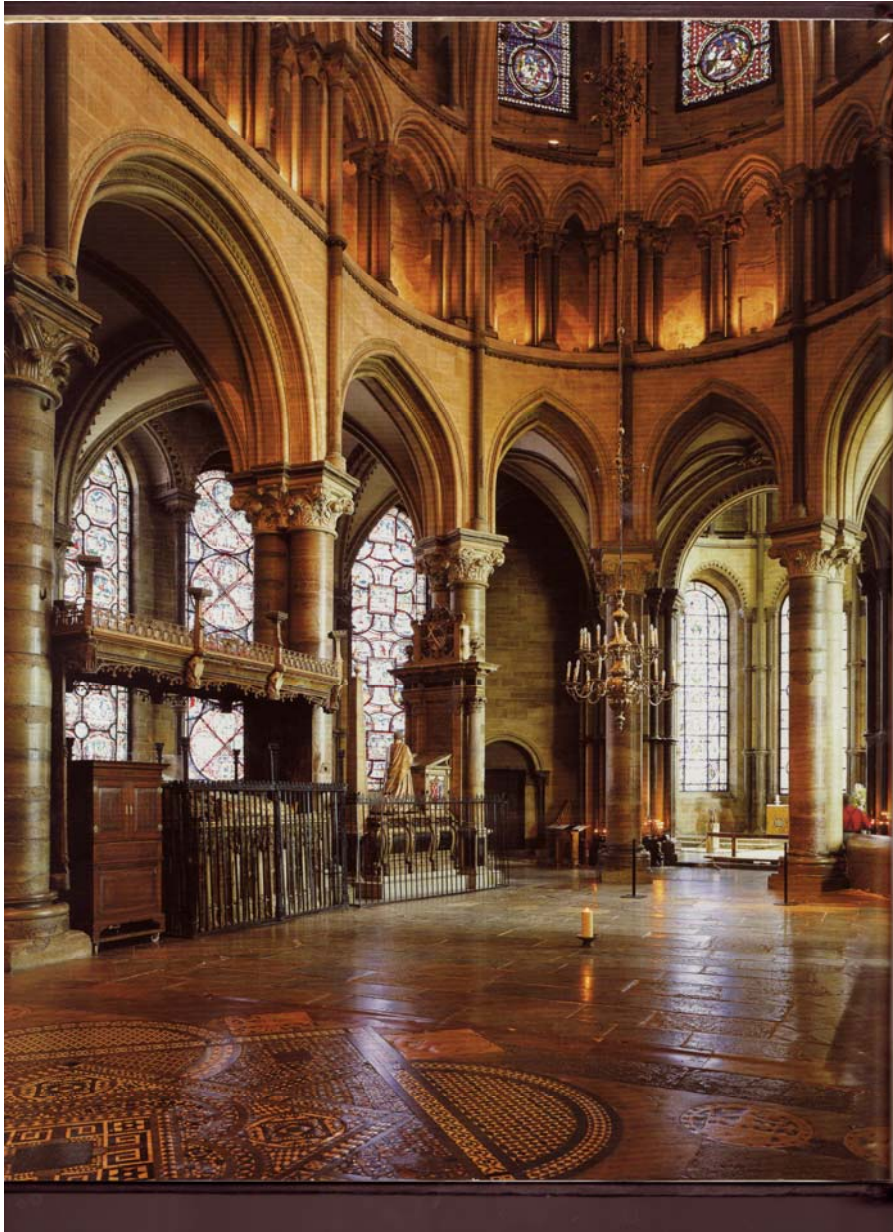Figure 1: Canterbury Cathedral, plan (from Peter Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, fig. 13)

Figure 2: Canterbury Cathedral, Trinity Chapel looking east (Paul Binski, *Becket's Crown*, fig. 1)
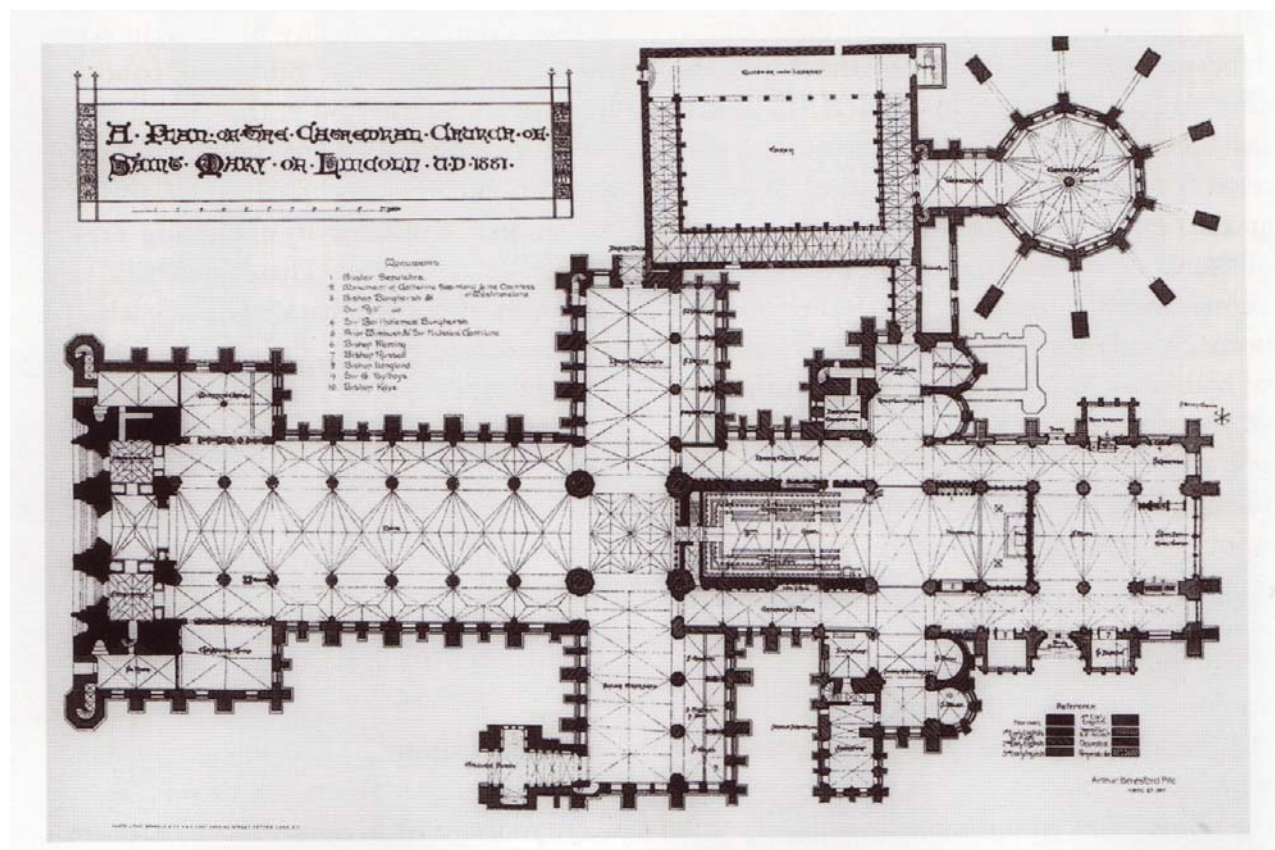
Figure 3: Lincoln Cathedral, plan (Peter Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, fig. 132)

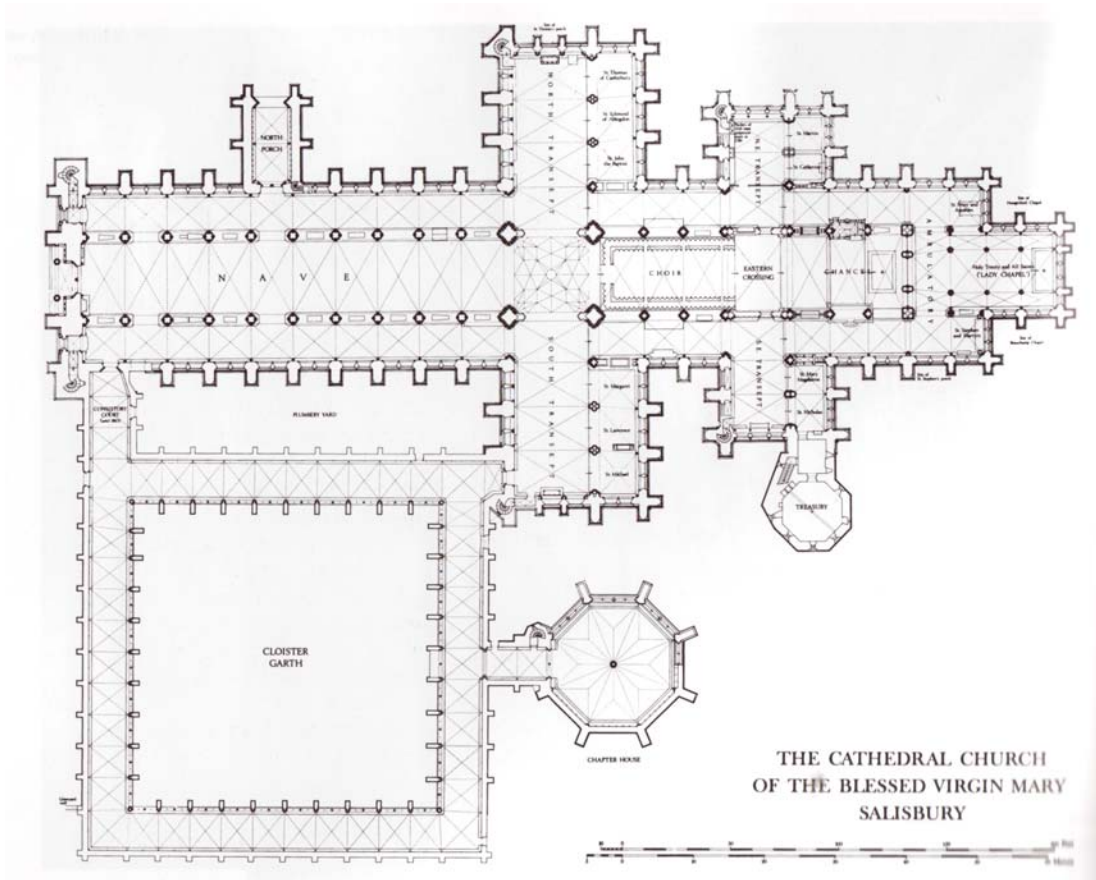Figure 4: Lincoln Cathedral, Angel Choir (Peter Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, fig.151)

Figure 5: Salisbury Cathedral, plan (Peter Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, fig. 157)

Figure 6: Salisbury Cathedral, presbytery looking north-west into choir
(Peter Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, fig. 164)

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