

The Capital Sculpture of Wells Cathedral: Masons, Patrons and the Margins of English Gothic Architecture

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For Eric Fernie

This paper considers the sculpted capitals in Wells cathedral. Although integral to the early Gothic fabric, they have hitherto eluded close examination as either a component of the building or as an important cycle of ecclesiastical imagery in their own right. Consideration of the archaeological evidence suggests that the capitals were introduced mid-way through the building campaigns and were likely the products of the cathedral's masons rather than part of an original scheme for the cathedral as a whole. Possible sources for the images are considered. The distribution of the capitals in lay and clerical spaces of the cathedral leads to discussion of how the imagery might have been meaningful to different audiences on either side of the choir screen.

INTRODUCTION

THE capital sculpture of Wells Cathedral has the dubious honour of being one of the most frequently published but least studied image cycles in English medieval art. The capitals of the nave, transepts, and north porch of the early Gothic church are ornamented with a rich array of figural sculptures ranging from hybrid human-animals, dragons, and Old Testament prophets, to representations of the trades that inhabit stiff-leaf foliage, which were originally highlighted with paint (Figs 1, 2).¹ The capitals sit upon a highly sophisticated pier design formed by a central cruciform support with triple shafts at each termination and in the angles, which offered the possibility for a range of continuous and individual sculpted designs in the capitals above (Fig. 3).² The capital sculpture was, however, only the most visually apparent sculpture that adorned the interior of the cathedral: the nave triforium spandrels feature foliate forms and animals; figural corbels ornament the west wall of the transepts; and an *ex situ* collection of figural spandrels formerly adorned the 'Lady chapel by the cloister',³ thus forming, when complete, one of the most richly embellished interiors of the late 12th and early 13th centuries. But the capitals especially stand as a curious one-off in English medieval art: in their remarkable dynamism and plasticity, and in their ornamentation of the main body of a cathedral church, there is no ready parallel for them in all of English Gothic architecture.

To date, the capitals have been considered from different perspectives, although they have eluded a major monographic study, and the majority of attention on the cathedral's early sculpture has focused instead on the west façade and funerary monuments.⁴ The most celebrated examples of the capitals appear in the major survey texts



FIG. 1. Wells cathedral: nave

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on ‘marginalia’ and capital sculpture, including Michael Camille’s chapter on ‘The Margins of the Cathedral’ in his controversial *Image on the Edge*, where they appear in contrast to French Romanesque and Gothic examples.⁵ The capitals have also been considered in the context of the development of sculpture in the English West Country, where Wells stands as the central monument of the ‘West Country School of Masons’, and authors have charted their influence in buildings from Devon to Dublin.⁶ The most thorough study of the capitals, however, remains Arthur Gardner’s pamphlet, first published in 1956 for the cathedral gift shop.⁷

One reason why the sculpture of Wells may have seemed an unlikely topic is a perceived stylistic antagonism between the capitals themselves and their architectural setting. Commentators on the capitals have sensed a disjunction between a ‘Romanesque’ mode of sculptural decoration within what was a decisively and by some readings definitively modern ‘Gothic’ building.⁸ Following these studies, current scholarship inherits a building with a tension imbedded in its very fabric between a ‘Romanesque’ mode of decoration and a ‘Gothic’ mode of spatial articulation, one aggressively modernist in approach and the other classicising and retrospective; one seemingly based

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FIG. 2. Wells cathedral: north transept

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on an overall system of design and the other upon a more random system of decoration. Of course, we have no statement from a medieval viewer recording their impressions of the Wells capitals, but if one was ever composed it is highly unlikely that it would have noted such a disjuncture in sculptural and architectural modes. The dismissal of the capitals as an ‘other’ to their architecture is not only contrary to the physical and structural character of the building, but it resolutely avoids asking the questions which the capitals themselves seem to pose, most importantly, what role did they play in the formation and reception of the cathedral overall?

This paper will offer a range of responses to this question by considering the capitals within the contexts of the cathedral itself: archaeological, masonic, performative. It is far beyond the bounds of a single paper to consider all of the capitals in depth; the iconography of many capitals remains unidentified and there are still significant unresolved questions about their sources and origins in English, and, more broadly, European art. This paper instead focuses on a range of issues concerning the capitals’ facture, archaeology and interpretation. I argue below that the arrangement of the imagery, and aspects of its style and iconography, cannot easily be understood as the



FIG. 3. Wells cathedral: nave capitals and piers
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FIG. 4. Wells cathedral: choir, showing 12th-century arcades and 14th-century rebuilding above
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product of a single intelligence working toward an overall ‘programme’, whether one locates such programmatic narratives within the ‘Gothic’ building or its ‘Romanesque’ sculpture. Indeed, pursuing either of these narratives seems not only impossible on the evidence offered by the works themselves, but fails to grasp the crucial context of the capitals’ facture and production, and by extension, that of the cathedral. The capitals can be readily, and I think most interestingly, understood within the masonic practices of the cathedral workshop. In locating the capitals within various discourses on facture and production, I aim further to integrate architectural ornament into what one historian of science has called the ‘messy nature’ of the development of Gothic architecture at the stage of conception and planning, thereby exploring the human or artistic factors that could and frequently did effect significant changes to design and meaning.⁹ An appendix detailing the capitals follows this paper.

DATE, ARCHITECTURAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXTS

OUR understanding of the Wells capitals — their date, physical and performative contexts — is principally dependent on an understanding of the fabric of the cathedral

itself. The expansion of the eastern arm in the early 14th century has destroyed or obscured much of the original building: the extant 12th-century fabric in this part of the building is now confined to the choir arcading three bays east of the crossing and the outer walling of the triforium and clerestory levels (Fig. 4).¹⁰ The remaining arcade capitals in the two bays east of the crossing bear only restrained stiff-leaf capitals with no figural ornament (Fig. 5). It is very unlikely that the 14th-century remodelling destroyed any late-12th-century figural sculpture in the building. Unless the eastern termination originally bore figural sculpture — and there is no reason to suggest that it did — it seems clear that figural capitals were not intended to adorn the sanctuary. The earliest figural sculpture is located on the eastern crossing piers, which contain only small carved heads amidst foliage and two dragons.¹¹ The mature figural capitals begin in the western parts of the transepts and continue five bays down the nave, when the sculpture again turns back to predominantly still-leaf foliage designs.

It is significant that the focus of the sculpture in the western aisles of the transepts and the eastern bays of the nave corresponds precisely with breaks in the building's construction. As Jerry Sampson has recently shown, the first and second phases of construction at Wells comprised the eastern Lady chapel, the three bay eastern arm and the first half of the transepts between c. 1175–84. The third phase, in which the figural capitals appear, involved the completion of the western parts of the transepts from a clear vertical division up the transept terminal walls down to the first five bays of the nave, including the north porch, c. 1184–1210. It has long been suggested that this latter break may have coincided with the Papal Interdict, when building works likely halted or slowed. The western parts of the nave and the west façade then followed from c. 1215–40.¹² Wells's carved capitals thus occur almost entirely within the third building phase c. 1184–1210 (Fig. 6).

In adhering to phases in the cathedral's construction, rather than to specific liturgical *loci* such as the choir, nave or cloister, the sculpture stands in contrast to a tradition in the elaboration of sacred spaces in medieval religious architecture. According to this tradition individual spaces were articulated by imagery and ornament which endowed them with meanings specific to their function: these meanings could be literal or allegorical.¹³ As St John Hope pointed out, the original choir screen, rood-loft and pulpitum were positioned between the nave piers one bay west of the western crossing piers, thereby officially demarcating the lay and clerical spaces in the building.¹⁴ The canon's three-bay choir stretched eastward between the choir screen and the eastern



FIG. 5. Wells cathedral: choir arcade capital

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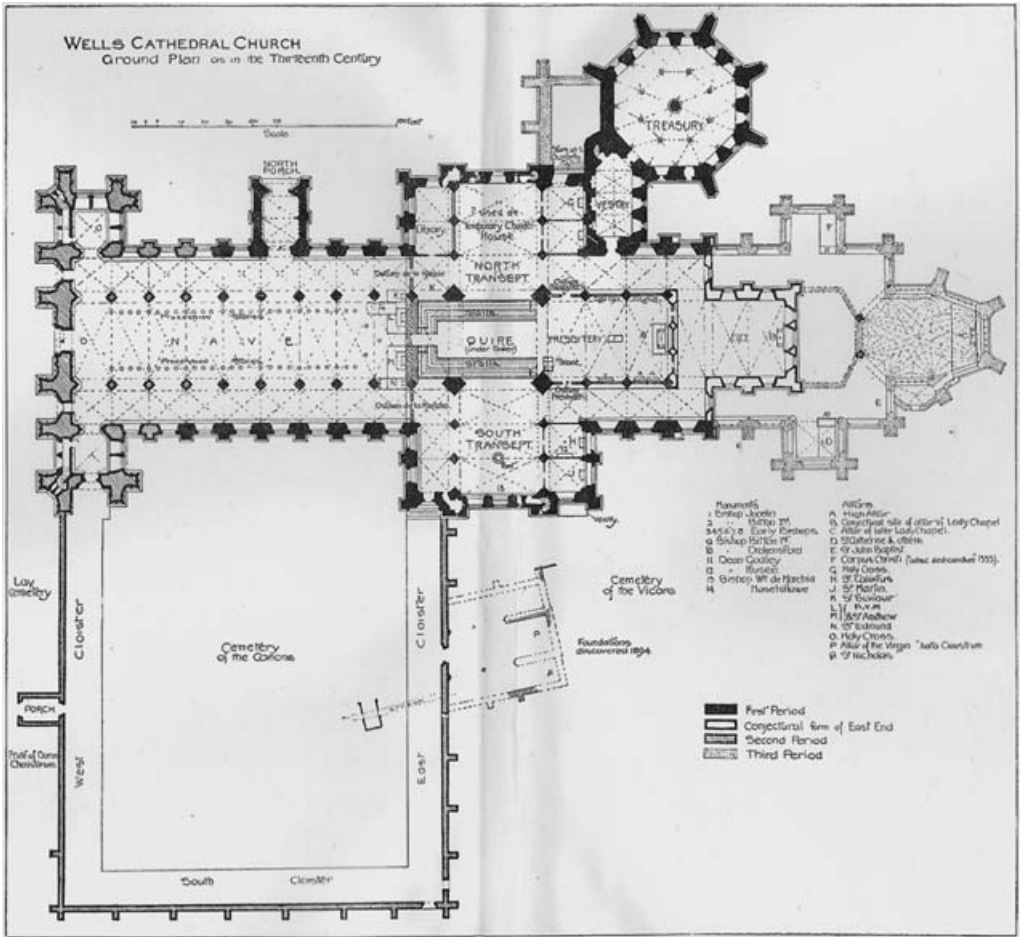


FIG. 6. Wells cathedral: ground plan of the 13th-century building after Church, *Chapters* (as n. 14)

crossing piers. The transepts held four east-facing transept chapels, and, until the Decorated chapter-house was built around 1300, the north transept housed the cathedral chapter-house and library. Scattered across these spaces, the capital sculpture thus rather promiscuously breached the line of the choir screen. A long-standing tradition in the decorum of religious buildings posits that images served as the books of the illiterate, although the sculpture at Wells was manifestly destined to be consumed by lay and clerical — and thus largely illiterate and literate — audiences on either side of the choir screen.¹⁵ While it might be suggested that the imagery was coded with specific stylistic and iconographic ‘languages’ suited to lay and clerical audiences respectively, such a hypothesis does not well match the nature of the imagery itself, which shows no obvious thematic or iconographic break at the point of the choir screen.¹⁶

This close connection with the history of the fabric, and the unexpected absence of figural ornament from the first two campaigns in the Lady chapel and eastern arm, means it is very unlikely that Wells's sculpture was conceived as a part of the cathedral's ornamentation from its inception, but rather that it was a development of the new phase beginning in the transepts. The fabric evidence now represents the most powerful testament to this new campaign. Whether this decision fell to the masons or to the dean and chapter cannot be answered authoritatively, since nothing is mentioned of it in the documentation. Nor can the change to figural sculpture be easily explained by a change of bishop or dean who could have advocated the change (deans were frequently in charge of building works at Wells).¹⁷ It has been plausibly suggested that this phase may mark the beginnings of the career of Master Adam Lock, who was working on the cathedral until he was replaced by Thomas Norreys in 1229. Lock could well have arrived at Wells with a model book or portfolio, and perhaps a trained atelier, and begun work at this stage. While it is entirely possible that the figural capitals were introduced by Lock, who was possibly employed at St Augustine's, Bristol, decades later to reproduce similar designs (see below), this cannot now be proven, since there is no documentary evidence for the beginning of Lock's work at Wells, meaning that he could have begun work at any stage.¹⁸ With or without a name to which we can attribute the new work, on balance the evidence suggests that the sculpture came about as a result of the cathedral's masonic practices rather than as part of an overall patronal vision of the building as a whole.

The demise of capital sculpture in the middle of the nave appears to follow the same logic. The end of the third phase was around 1210, shortly after the declaration of the papal interdict, which must eventually have caused a halt in building. This alone would have meant the dissolution of the Wells workshop. The masons' marks indicate that the workforce at Wells was largely dispersed at this stage, with the possible exception of two masons who were either maintained on site or returned to the site when building works began again.¹⁹ The few scattered examples of figural sculpture in the nave between the point of the break of c. 1210 and the beginning of the west façade c. 1220 might well have been executed before the break and installed after, or perhaps executed by one or two men then onsite capable of carving capitals in the already established mode. In either case, changes to the formation of the workshop must have been the deciding factor in the disappearance of capital sculpture from the nave. This would not be the last time that funding or historical circumstance dictated dramatic changes in the cathedral's workshop: a lack of funding in 1242–43, a result of the financial strain caused by a lengthy dispute in the Roman curia, meant that the west façade programme — the next major statement of sculpture in the cathedral — was never completed and its masons pursued work elsewhere.²⁰

As haphazard as the capital sculpture may seem, it was formed by a consistent methodology in the transepts and nave. The capitals are composed of four identical L-shaped pieces, each comprising a cardinal-facing capital and a diagonally set capital to its right (Fig. 7). These four L-shaped pieces were positioned around a square core arising from the centre of the pier itself. This is of fundamental importance for understanding both the working methods of the sculptors and the disposition of imagery in the building. First, this meant that sculpture was carved from standardised blocks and could be carved *ex situ* in the workshop rather than *in situ* on the pier.²¹ That *ex situ* carving was the normal procedure for the Wells sculpture is suggested by the frequent rough carving around the joins of the capitals, where imagery or foliage was cut back to allow the capitals to fit neatly together. Second, it means that each

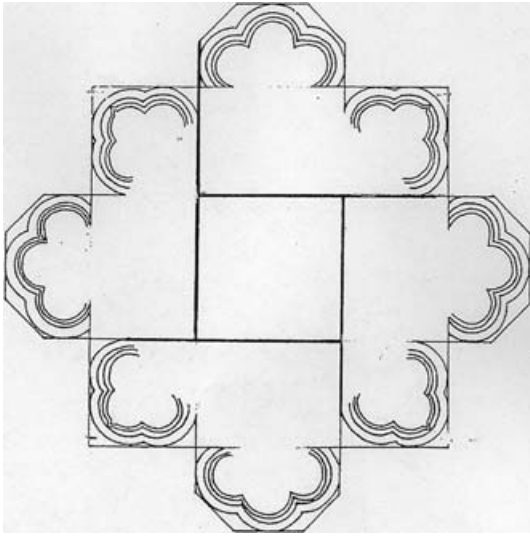


FIG. 7. Plan of nave-pier indicating position of capitals

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cardinal-facing capital and its diagonal pair was necessarily planned and executed together, thus allowing for four possible zones of decoration on each capital. The consequence of this is that the capitals could be pre-fabricated in the workshop and either arranged sequentially to suggest a linear narrative or applied interchangeably.

MASONIC PRACTICES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF STYLE

IN locating mason-craft at the centre of this discussion it is valuable to ground some of these observations within the context of the profession generally and its practices in particular.²² I am not the first to consider the capitals a mason's invention — so much was suggested by Arthur Gardner and Lawrence Stone who (without consideration of the archaeology of the capitals or their place in the history of the building) were nevertheless typical of scholars of their generation in considering the capitals therefore to be 'charming' and 'without didactic purpose'.²³ Viewed from a different perspective, the capitals can be understood as exceptionally illuminating illustrations of the role and pretensions of artists in the early Gothic period. If I am right in suggesting that the appearance and disappearance of sculpture at Wells was largely the result of the masons, rather than the direct intervention of a patron, then this would appear to agree with what we know of the profession in the period. Given the complexity of the foliage at Wells, it is doubtful that the introduction of figural capitals was either more expensive or more time-consuming for the masons, and would not have significantly changed the day-to-day operations, or the financial arrangements between the masons and the chapter. While we have no way of knowing whether or not this was agreed in advance by the dean and chapter, there is no doubt that the new ornamental elaboration of the capitals signalled a major change in the aesthetic character of the interior as a whole.²⁴

Although the documentation at Wells is silent about this issue, an intriguing parallel is provided by contemporary work at St Alban's under Abbot John (1195–1214), recorded by Matthew Paris in his *Gesta Abbatum*. Matthew states that Abbot John

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hired Master Hugh de Goldclif, ‘a deceitful and unreliable man, but a craftsman of great reputation (*praelectus*)’ whose influence caused to be built ‘carved work (*caelaturis*), unnecessary, trifling, and beyond measure costly’. The extravagant cost of these additions caused the work to languish and the finances to run out. The walls were left uncovered during a rainy season, the columns and capitals fell to ruin, ‘and the wreck of images and flowers was a cause of laughter to all those who saw it’.²⁵ On one level, Matthew’s writing exposes the realities of contemporary building practice and the frustrations of patrons who lost control of a building project to the hands of an ambitious, cunning, and ultimately unreliable builder. On another level, Matthew indulges here in a long-standing *topos*: in a range of classical and biblical narratives on the artist from the Tower of Babel to the tale of Daedalus, we find the artist’s pomposity and excess fracture a prevailing sense of decorum in building, resulting in failure and ultimately shame and punishment for his patrons.²⁶

Matthew’s passage is far from unique. In fact, contemporary documentation on masons and mason-craft bears the refrain that masons are temperamental, untrustworthy, duplicitous and frequently working to their own creative agendas rather than the visions of their patrons. Most famously, Gervase of Canterbury’s *De Combustione* suggests that William of Sens’ own Icarus-like fall from the scaffolding in 1179 had been the result of opulence — a typically monastic moralising of the masonic profession.²⁷ Around 1200, the canons at Beverley hired masons who were ‘not as prudent as they were cunning’ and were concerned with beauty rather than structure in erecting a crossing tower that was ‘wonderful and hazardous’, which eventually toppled, destroying much of the nave in the process.²⁸ Much the same attitude can be deduced from contemporary discussions of imagery in wall-painting. Also around 1200, in the context of an attempt to ‘curb the license of painters’ in the well-known *Pictor in Carmine*, a West Country Cistercian assigned the introduction of non-biblical imagery, much of which can be directly compared to the iconography of the Wells capitals, to ‘the criminal presumption of painters [who] gradually introduced these sports of fantasy, which the church ought not to have countenanced so long’.²⁹

In assigning the creation of the sculpture primarily to the cathedral’s masons rather than its patrons, we would thus not seem to be arguing against the thrust of the documentary evidence for the period, in which artistic personality frequently dominated patronal intention, even if the evidence we now have hails from the monastic sphere and is laden with the conventions of monastic writing. It may not be a gross anachronism to suggest that the apparent autonomy of the sculptor or mason — well known through the writings of Vasari — and the progression of his craft through competition, rivalry and an arsenal of closely guarded secrets was a *topos* of artistic creation before and beyond the Renaissance.³⁰ Clearly, the Wells masons did not erect a building that fell on account of its own opulence, but it is nevertheless intriguing to see the sculpture as the invention of a highly ambitious and technically advanced atelier of sculptors, whose own master stroke of creativity was the carved imagery in the transepts and nave of the cathedral.

The sculpture itself provides compelling evidence that the Wells atelier was a dynamic group of high-quality sculptors, and that the development of imagery, technique and even style is suggestive of a process of constant experimentation and improvisation. While the capitals in the eastern arm of the late 1170s and early 1180s have restrained foliage that closely adheres to its block, as the building progressed from east to west the foliage becomes increasingly complex, stylised and emancipated from its background. As many authors have noted, the cathedral sculpture seems to grow

organically from the piers themselves in successive stages from east to west.³¹ The development of the capital form suggests a continual revision to, and questioning of, the original stiff-leaf design. Like many ateliers, a mason's lodge (a term used very loosely here) was a place of training, leading eventually to showmanship, competition, and 'inflation' of the atelier's ornamental repertoire.³² It was, in the words of David Turnbull, a 'laboratory', a 'site of experimental practice',³³ in which internal competition within the atelier was a significant impetus for stylistic development as sculptors sought self-consciously to surpass the standing examples around them through superlative statements of their art.

Remarkable new displays of foliate forms are found on piers N8 and N10 where we see sculpture pushed to the maximum of its material possibilities as stalks criss-cross one another and daringly extend from their blocks, threatening the breaking point (Fig. 8). Elaborate though these displays may be, they are nevertheless rigidly symmetrical, providing a sense of copious but highly disciplined abundance. The same laterally symmetrical composition is found in many of the historiated capitals as well, suggesting that it was part of the desired aesthetic form of the capitals as much as a part of their design methodology. These capitals — located mostly in the later sculpture in the cathedral nave — feature symmetrically positioned pairs of birds or hybrids who preen themselves or bite foliage, while nevertheless being positioned within the frame of the capital. In a dramatic example in the north nave aisle, two deeply undercut hybrids threaten to reverse the formal properties of the capital: by illusionistically dissolving the face of the capital into a horizontal screen of foliate sprays, each seemingly floating detached from its background, the sculptors seem to question the capital's very materiality (Fig. 9).

It is intrinsically unlikely that such developments were achieved to meet the desires of a patron, since little documentation on medieval art indicates such close specificity on the part of a commissioner of a work of art, particularly in reference to minor changes of the style of an established part of the architectural ensemble part-way through a building campaign. Rather, the development of capital sculpture at Wells, characterised by the a constant revision of a pre-existing 'type' designed within the workshop, suggests that sculptors consciously sought to surpass earlier models. It is possible — as with other architectural elaborations of the period — that such additions were conceived by their patrons within an ultimately classical topos of outdoing earlier models or examples. The development of the capital sculpture at Wells cannot simply



FIG. 8. Wells cathedral: nave capital N8
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FIG. 9. Wells cathedral: nave capital
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be explained as an example of ‘increasing elaboration’ but as a narrative of artistic competition and ingenuity within what was, manifestly, a dynamic atelier of sculptors.

THE CONTEXT OF THE WELLS WORKSHOP

SOME sense of the range of imagery employed at Wells, and perhaps of its logic, may be gleaned by reference to the other monuments associated with the Wells atelier. As Sir Harold Brakspear established in an important article, Wells was the culmination of the ‘West Country school of masons’, a masonic tradition that had origins in the mid-12th-century architecture of the English West Country.³⁴ Like many European cathedral workshops, Wells was a major centre for masons and sculptors in the region during the period of its construction c. 1175–1240. A number of buildings in the south-west of England reflect the influence of the cathedral’s new style: nearby Glastonbury Abbey clearly employed some of its masons, as did St Augustine’s in Bristol, and the influence of the sculpture has been noted at Exeter and Dublin Cathedrals, and at King John’s dwellings at Corfe Castle in Dorset, c. 1201–05.³⁵

While the origins of Wells’s architecture have been carefully studied and located for the most part in West Country traditions, which were inflected with the new styles prevalent in France, the same cannot be said for the building’s figural sculpture.³⁶ Simply put, there is little sculpture from Romanesque England that prepares us for the dynamism, quality, or iconography of the early Gothic sculpture at Wells. Indeed, the origin of the Wells workshop constitutes one of the great unknowns of artistic production in the early Gothic period.³⁷ The Wells sculpture seems to emerge from an atelier fully formed and comfortable with the medium of the stone capital and the range of imagery employed in the 1180s. This has allowed commentators to posit a place of origin for the sources of the early Gothic fabric in the Noyon³⁸ or Soissons/Champagne³⁹ regions of France. It is beyond the scope of this paper fully to address this point, but this discussion of the sources for the imagery indicates an awareness of both French and English material, thus suggesting that the artistic situation at Wells was more complex than simply hiring a foreign atelier with a range of foreign sources to build in a French mode.

Happily, we have some documentary evidence for the travels of the atelier once established at Wells. Datable to between 1218–22, a letter from David, abbot of St Augustine’s, Bristol, to the dean of Wells, asks for the loan of his servant ‘L’ (possibly mason Adam Lock) ‘to hew out the seven pillars of wisdom, that is the Chapel of Our Lady’ (Fig. 10).⁴⁰ Referencing the language of Proverbs 9:1 (‘Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars’), the abbot alludes to the Virgin as the *Sedes Sapientiae* and provides an allegorical reading of a building then only in the planning phases. As Malcolm Thurlby has shown, the range of imagery employed in the Elder Lady chapel is not only iconographically similar to Wells (employing prophets, animals, hybrids, etc.), but it also is intimately related stylistically, thus confirming the authorship of a mason or masons with direct knowledge of the cathedral’s imagery.

Similar though the images may be, it is notable that the masons expressed less fidelity toward the original ‘sources’ at Wells than might be expected: the Bristol work is suggestive of a process of adapting existing iconographies into new architectural frames. The capital N9 at Wells (of which more will be said below) features a fox carrying off a goose, which is being pursued by a farmhand (Fig. 11). An abbreviated version of this scene appears at Bristol in bay 1 south, which omits the farmhand



FIG. 10. St Augustine's, Bristol: Elder Lady chapel, interior
Malcolm Thurlby



FIG. 11. Wells cathedral: the fox and the cock/goose N9
Matthew M. Reeve



FIG. 12. St Augustine's, Bristol: Elder Lady chapel, fox and cock/goose spandrel
Malcolm Thurlby

(Fig. 12). Here the fox grasps the long-necked goose, but turns his head to face the viewer, thus allowing the scene to fit within the triangular space of the dado arcade spandrels. A closer 'copy' of the Wells work is suggested by the hybrid beast on bay 2 south in comparison with a corbel in the south transept at Wells. Here the two-winged beasts inhabit a background of stiff-leaf foliage; they both turn their necks to look behind them and appear to be wearing long pointed caps in the manner of contemporary representations of Jews.⁴¹

The relationship between Wells and Bristol is complex. While the iconography and style of the Bristol spandrels derives from Wells, the quality of the Bristol work is considerably poorer. Dating to the 1220s, the Elder Lady chapel is some two or three decades after the execution of the Wells sculpture, and its architectural details have been updated in accord with the new work on the cathedral's west front. In terms of traditional, style-based criteria for medieval sculpture, the Bristol sculpture seems even more remarkably old fashioned against the Wells work. Given the significant date-range between the buildings, and the apparent difference in quality, it is possible that the Bristol work was executed by an assistant of 'L'.

What is more significant for my purposes is that consideration of the work at Wells, Bristol and other buildings where the Wells atelier was demonstrably employed provides positive evidence of the practices of the workshop vis-à-vis their sources. Wells itself could not have served as the single repository for images in the workshop, since a number of the sculptures at Bristol cannot be paralleled at Wells. The imagery in the spandrel on bay 2 south at Bristol, for instance, features a range of animal musicians, including a ram playing a viol and a monkey or ape holding a wind instrument (Fig. 13). The wisdom of these animal musicians was based on writings by the Roman fabulist Phaedrus and Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae*.⁴² This imagery of beasts playing instruments had a prestigious precedent in the capitals of the crypt of Canterbury cathedral, which provides the closest possible parallel known to me in England.⁴³ While this image cannot be paralleled at Wells, it is significant that it is found in the south aisle of Hawkchurch in Devon, a church closely related to the work of the Wells atelier (Fig. 14).⁴⁴ Given the replication of some of these motifs across a range of buildings authored by the Wells masons, we may posit the existence of a dossier of designs and motifs — perhaps a loose-leaf model-book that was in circulation in the workshop and which could have informed the subsequent designs.

THE IMAGERY AND ITS SOURCES

IN order to set a discussion of the sculpture in context, it is important now to attempt an exposition of its imagery. Miscellaneous though it may be, it is crucial to grasp that the imagery at Wells is fundamentally different in character, composition and medium to other contemporary image cycles in English Gothic great churches. As far as we can now determine, and in contrast to such cycles as the stained glass at Canterbury, the former choir stall paintings at Peterborough, the south porch sculpture at Malmesbury abbey, and the later painted vaults of Salisbury cathedral, 12th- and early-13th-century Wells is notable for its complete lack of imagery derived directly from the New Testament.⁴⁵ Hagiographical imagery features in a few prominent places, but images from the New Testament are totally absent from the capital sculpture, and allusions to the Old Testament are found only in a number of prophets.⁴⁶ It must be admitted that we know almost nothing of the early stained glass of the building (and absolutely



FIG. 13. St Augustine's, Bristol: Elder Lady chapel, animal musicians spandrel

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FIG. 14. Hawkchurch (Devon): animal musician capital

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nothing about its wall-painting), but the present evidence suggests a programme of grisaille glass, which can only have heightened the visual prominence of the capitals.⁴⁷ At Wells we have to await the former monumental sculpture of the north porch programme (see below) and the construction of the lowest tiers of the west façade, probably built from the 1220s, before we have any *in situ* evidence of imagery derived from the New Testament.

By far the most significant category of representation in the Wells sculpture is animals and hybrid animal-humans, some of which are derived from the illuminated bestiary. The appearance of these creatures as non-narrative motifs anchored in non-specific backgrounds suggests their own mobility from manuscript model to stone sculpture. On the west face of N7 is a bird with a serpentine tail and a crowned human head, and which points with a sword or dagger into the central nave space (Fig. 15). The creature is readily identified as a basilisk — a frequent representation in the contemporary bestiary (Fig. 16). The moralisation of the animal follows:

[T]he basilisk's name in Greek (*regulus*) means 'little king' because he is the king of creeping things. Those who see him flee, because his scent will kill them. And he will kill a man by simply looking at them [...] the basilisk signifies the devil, who openly kills the heedless sinner with his venom; he himself is conquered, like all other harmful creatures, by the soldier of Christ who puts all his hope in the world [...] But, truly, at the glorious coming of the Lord all creatures will lie subject to his feet. He alone was strong enough to subdue these fierce creatures, who is coeternal and consubstantial with the father in his divinity.⁴⁸



FIG. 15. Wells cathedral: basilisk capital N7
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FIG. 16. Basilisk, Oxford Bodleian MS 764 (Barber, *Bestiary* (as n. 47), 184)

Several other animals also suggest derivation from a bestiary source. The ram on N7NW and the stork eating a frog at N9 can also be located squarely within in the illustrated bestiary tradition (Figs 17, 18). According to the bestiary, the stork ‘signifies prudent men, careful servants of god. Just as storks pursue snakes and draw off their poisons, so they pursue evil spirits who make poisonous suggestions’.⁴⁹

The illustrated bestiary was, however, only the most obvious source for some of the Wells animal sculpture.⁵⁰ By the 12th century, its wisdom, and that of the *Physiologus* on which it was based, had entered into many aspects of medieval culture, from sermons to visual art and poetry.⁵¹ Other animal-hybrids are suggestive of a more complex heritage. N9SE features a siren with the torso of a homonid and the tail of a fish, with a club slung over his shoulder and a fish held in his left (Fig. 19). Although deriving ultimately from classical literature, the siren was a common motif in Romanesque and Gothic art, signifying men (or sometimes women) of dissolute life who have succumbed to the pleasures of the world, including music and theatre.⁵² The siren is paired with an onocentaur in the analogous position on S9 (Fig. 20). Also a



FIG. 17. Wells cathedral: stork (or spoonbill) eating frog capital N9
Matthew M. Reeve



FIG. 18. Stork and Frog:
Oxford, Bodleian MS 764
(Barber, *Bestiary* (as n. 47),
131)

hybrid creature, he has the legs of an ass with cloven feet and the head and torso of a man; with his right hand he holds his traditional attribute of a rolled-up scroll and with his left he holds a bunch of foliage, and he bends his body to gaze attentively to the centre of the nave space.

Piers N9 and S9 represent one of the only logical north–south pairings of imagery, at least in so far as a clear textual source can be cited. However rare in English art of the period, sirens and onocentaurs were frequently paired in Romanesque art on the Continent and their appearance at Wells may owe as much to a lost visual source as to this convention of representation. Although appearing in the *Physiologus* and the bestiary, the ultimate sources for these creatures were Isaiah 13: 21–22: ‘Now beasts make their home there, and an empty echo is heard in the houses. Sirens have their habitation there, and demons dance. Onocentaurs dwell there, and hedgehogs breed in the halls’, and Isaiah 34: 11–14:

And in the land shall live birds and vipers, and ibises and ravens; and thorns shall be cast into that deserted land, and onocentaurs shall dwell there. There shall be no rulers of the land; for its kings and its rulers and its grandees shall be destroyed. And nettles shall sprout up in their cities and in the securest places of the land, and the hamlet shall be full of sirens and the houses shall be full of



FIG. 19. Wells cathedral: siren capital N9
Matthew M. Reeve



FIG. 20. Wells cathedral: onocentaur
capital S9
Matthew M. Reeve

sparrows. And spirits shall meet with onocentaurs; and they shall call to each other; there shall the onocentaurs halt, for they shall have found rest in themselves.

Isaiah here describes the destruction of Edom when the Lord destroyed man and beast alike until the rivers ran with blood. From this desolation emerged a land of sirens, onocentaurs and other monsters, which would await purification with the coming of Christ.

In the vulgate version of these texts, Jerome slightly changes their interpretation by adding a particular moral colouring to the *loci* of Isaiah's beasts, such that their dwellings become dwellings of pleasure. Jerome's version also changes and shuffles the creatures mentioned, including owls, whose sounds replace the empty echo of the new territory, as well as ostriches, demons and dragons. That this pairing may have referenced the vulgate text of Isaiah rather than artistic conventions is supported by the presence of an owl on the other side of the same pier as the onocentaur.

It is significant that Wells's animal imagery drew from not only established sources such as the bestiary, but also from new and 'cutting edge' didactic and moral sources such as the Latin beast fable. Capital N9 features a farm hand carrying a ball in his left hand and a mallet in his right, in pursuit of a fox with a goose in its mouth (Fig. 11). Representations of 'the fox and the cock', were of course common in medieval art from the 13th century onward, and appear to be linked to both literary and oral traditions. As Kenneth Varty has shown, however, the Wells sculpture represents not only a precociously early example of this iconography, but it derives from a specific source: it is the earliest visual representation of Pierre de Saint Cloud's poem the *Ysengrimus* of c. 1175. Varty showed that the literary tradition was the principal source for the representation of the mallet and ball: in the *Ysengrimus*, a game of *coule* was interrupted by the fox stealing the cock, and the figure pursuing the fox must represent one of the *vilains* or farmhands. The substitution of a goose for a cock was linked to oral traditions, and its substitution was common enough in visual representations.⁵³ Varty's reading is significant, since it suggests that a range of recent literary sources featured among the possibilities for representation in the cathedral, and it also points to the assimilation of the new genre of moralising Latin beast fables into the repertoire of the cathedral's imagery. The text of the *Ysengrimus*, perhaps like its visual translations, worked by offering, or in the case of sculpture, perhaps, bringing to mind, a range of proverbial wisdoms, such as 'a bird in the hand is worth eight in the bush', or 'whoever is willing to return cruelty for kindness is equal to the devil himself'.⁵⁴

The narratives from sermon *exempla* were also influential in forming the imagery of the capitals. It is clear that visual art could be influenced by new ideas expounded in the sermon and, reciprocally, evidence exists to suggest that works of art formed visual stimuli for preachers who used the images as visual exegeses in their orations.⁵⁵ From this perspective, the diverse imagery provided a malleable range of images that could be selected, interpreted and employed in a performative context. The arrangement of three birds or doves on N9W (Fig. 21) might be glossed by Hugh of Fouilloi's *De Avibus*, which suggests that the three doves represent Noah, David and Christ, with the explicit message being to cease sinning, be steadfast, and seek salvation — all of which, according to Hugh, might form the basis for a sermon.⁵⁶ The well-known 'fruit stealers' capital may also have been based on current *exempla*. One of two or three capitals in the cathedral that features a single narrative that wraps around the capital frieze, the fruit stealers capital begins with a scene of a youth holding a basket of grapes accompanied with an assistant who holds a billhook; in the second scene a labourer



FIG. 21. Wells cathedral: three birds/doves capital N9

Matthew M. Reeve

tells the farmer of the theft as it is taking place by pointing backward with his right hand; the farmer then apprehends the older man whose apron is full of grapes by the hood of his cloak; the farmer strikes the older man with a pitchfork, causing him to lose his hat and scatter his grapes on the ground (Figs 22–25). The imagery is not, as far as I am aware, found elsewhere in medieval art, but its content is very close to a sermon of Jacques de Vitry, in which he recounts that a group of thieves rob a vineyard and are punished and given penance, but shortly afterward rob another vineyard after confession.⁵⁷

A number of capitals in the nave and western transepts featured images of peasant labourers: wool-combing, spinning, butchers, a mason and a leather worker. Carved representations of rural labour were probably an invention of the 12th century, when images of working peasants began to appear in a variety of Romanesque sculptural programmes, frequently intermixed with religious imagery. Notably enough, the appearance of these labourers in visual art coincided with important changes whereby formerly 'illicit trades' began to be seen as necessary for the common good.⁵⁸ Although this new iconography often borrowed from the iconography of labour represented in medieval liturgical calendars, there is nothing overtly temporal implied by the Wells labours.⁵⁹ It appears that the sculptures were intended to reference specific labours in the burgeoning city as well as more generalised representations. Labours like leather-making and butchery were central to Wells's urban economy. Quickly expanding fairs sponsored by the cathedral accommodated these goods and fostered economic and social links between the urban populace and the great church.⁶⁰ While some images appear to have been specific and topical, others appear to have referenced more traditional iconographies. The spinner, for instance, now largely hidden behind the cornices of the later Bubwith chantry chapel (and indeed damaged by an iron tie), is a typical example of its type with a seated woman engaged with her spindle and distaff (Fig. 26). Referencing Proverbs 31:19, 'She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands to the spindle', spinning in medieval art and life was a task exclusive to women. One recent commentator has called the distaff and spindle 'an archetype of the feminine', suggesting perhaps that the image of a woman spinning signified both the act of labour as much as the gender of the labourer herself.⁶¹ The representations of the trades at Wells may well have been intended, as Schapiro famously suggested for images of peasants, to reveal 'the earthly activity of man in an art devoted chiefly to a supernatural



FIG. 22. Wells cathedral: 'fruit stealers' capital
S13SE
Matthew M. Reeve



FIG. 23. Wells cathedral: 'fruit stealers' capital
S13NE
Matthew M. Reeve



FIG. 24. Wells cathedral: 'fruit stealers' capital
S13NW
Matthew M. Reeve



FIG. 25. Wells cathedral: 'fruit stealers' capital
S13SW
Matthew M. Reeve

order',⁶² thus locating these representations of Wells's laity within the broader arena of meditations on human morality and contingency represented in the capitals.

A final category of representation was a range of seven Old Testament prophets. Some prophets such as Moses are identified by an attribute — the traditional round-headed tablets of the law⁶³ — while others such as Daniel or Habakkuk are identified by their names written on their scrolls (Figs 27, 28). Other prophets bear blank scrolls (perhaps originally featuring painted texts), and thus cannot be identified. What the original source may have been for the prophets is unclear. Images of prophets could have derived from any number of sources, most obviously the tradition of illuminated prophet-books, although it is unlikely that such sources were available to the Wells masons.⁶⁴ Indeed, the Wells prophets do not appear to have derived from any typical collection of Old Testament imagery, but rather represent instead a collection of both the major and minor prophets taken at random.

Thus described, the Wells capitals are remarkable for their sheer diversity of imagery, deriving from a variety of sources. I have already speculated that the Wells sculptors may have had available to them a model book of some sort on which to base many of



FIG. 26. Wells cathedral: spinner capital, N10
Matthew M. Reeve

their designs at the cathedral and at other sites. This book would have comprised imagery from the bestiary, and perhaps from other medieval or ancient texts concerning animals such as Pliny's *Historia Naturalis* and *Aesop's Fables*, as well as new moral and didactic sources like the *Ysengrimus* and a range of hagiographical material. Some of the sources, such as the labours and prophets, may not have derived from a single visual source, but may represent transformations of existing iconographies, which were



FIG. 27. Wells cathedral: Moses capital, N13
Matthew M. Reeve



FIG. 28. Wells cathedral: Daniel capital, N10
Matthew M. Reeve

adapted to specific needs on site. Many of the images such as the *spinario* or the mouth-pullers manifestly derive from a lengthy tradition of architectural sculpture.⁶⁵

Although I have stressed the significance of the sculptor's art in the creation of the imagery, it is certainly possible that the dean and chapter may have had some involvement in the composition and selection of specific images. The appearance of representations from new Latin didactic literature, such as the fox and the cock capital from the *Ysengrimus*, the fruit stealers capital, or possible representations from texts such as *De Avibus*, would seem to stand far outside the range of experience of the 12th-century sculptor and suggests input from the Wells *eruditi* or another learned authority. Speculating on the sources available to sculptors is best done with great caution. The earliest model books of portfolios that we have date to a generation or so after the Wells sculpture, although it seems very likely that they existed long before. The remarkably diverse character of model books or portfolios suggest the possibility of a wide range of images that do not seem connected in the modern imagination.⁶⁶

READING THE IMAGERY

MUCH scholarly attention has been focused on the reading or consumption of architectural sculpture, with the Romanesque capital featuring centrally. It will be clear from what follows that I am sympathetic to current, post-structuralist discourses that have explored the multiplicity of meanings for sculpture, thereby questioning the stable and singular relationship between text and image or signifier and signified in the mind of the medieval viewer suggested by earlier scholars. Sculpture could resonate in a variety of ways with the liturgy, sermons and other products of ecclesiastical culture, which figuratively brought the imagery to life, and with changing liturgical functions of the building and its spaces. Indeed, the specific authority that these images possess as signs seems to lie in the instability of their meaning, their radical interpretability: their 'surplus' of meanings, to quote one recent study.⁶⁷

Although it is seldom noted by art historians, contemporary theories on religious art specifically allowed for and even advocated a plurality of meanings for images that were not necessarily tethered to a specific textual referent. Beauty, abstracted from any indexical meaning, was in itself an important desideratum, and images that had no obvious textual 'source' could serve a positive function as ornamentation that did not tell a specific story or communicate a specific idea, but that functioned as an ocular distraction, preventing weariness during the liturgy. Art historians are most accustomed to negative critiques of imagery from the Bernardine tradition and in subsequent Cistercian texts such as *Pictor in Carmine*, in which the eyes of audiences are considered to be 'caught by pleasure that is not only vain but profane'.⁶⁸ The positive functions of ornament are however made clear in a number of medieval texts, such as Nicholas of Tui's tripartite approach to the image in religious buildings, which could teach doctrine, inspire imitation, and delight through ornamentation (c. 1230).⁶⁹ Nicholas echoes the sentiments of commentators such as Abbot Suger of St Denis by suggesting that the sheer visual appeal of art — its technical virtuosity and its beauty — were themselves features that were worthy of contemplation. In studying complex ecclesiastical images such as the Wells capitals, we must guide our interpretations accordingly, and expect that imagery could serve a range of pedagogical and edificatory, as well as value-neutral, functions. We risk neither anachronism nor simplification in suggesting that some imagery could have functioned simply as decoration that materially elaborated the building without being intended to denote specific didactic or programmatic

meanings, a conclusion that seems well suited to both the material and documentary evidence at Wells.

But the capitals pose further and more institutionally specific problems of interpretation beyond an apparent plurality of meaning. The first is their audience. Located within the cathedral's building phases, we have seen that the capitals straddle the choir screen, suggesting that, officially at least, they were seen and consumed by two different audiences.⁷⁰ While there is no obvious change in the general form or iconography of the images on either side of the choir screen, some images do suggest that they were geared to addressing their respective audiences and their liturgical actions. These examples aside, we face the question of how clerical and lay audiences may have interpreted the images, which derive, broadly speaking, from a common repertoire on either side of the choir screen, and how the different activities — both secular and liturgical — may have shaped meaning and interpretation.

A final problem relates to the historiographical traditions of medieval sculpture itself. In studying the Wells sculpture, we necessarily turn to a lengthy historiography of the Romanesque capital in the 12th-century monastery, into which the Wells sculpture has been uneasily placed. Scholars have written brilliantly on sculpture within the monastic milieu, locating the imagery and its reading(s) within the intellectual and social cultures of the enclosed monastery, and more specifically within 'the monastic mentalité',⁷¹ revealing that the coding and decoding of sculpture (what Mâle called the *empreinte monastique*)⁷² was informed by specifically monastic modes of perception and cognition practiced within the monastic enclosure, citing ready parallels with music, liturgy and texts. While any study of the Wells capitals necessarily borrows from the work of these scholars, important distinctions must be made between monastic and secular modes of perception — what Stanley Fish has called different 'interpretive communities'.⁷³ The secular canons of Wells were fundamentally worldly figures who held lucrative prebends within a new urban cathedral. While we know much less about the literary and intellectual interests of the Wells canons than we would like, it would be a serious mistake to suggest that they shared the same modes of interpretation of visual signs or written texts fostered within a monastic environment. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that many of the motifs employed at Wells had a long-standing pedigree in monastic art, such as the spinario or the hybrid. However, while motifs were mobile and transportable to new places and communities, the same cannot and should not be said for culturally and institutionally specific modes of perception.

The Wells canons as audience

It seems clear that aspects of the sculptural decoration within spaces used by the canons — namely the transepts and north porch — were geared to amplifying and commenting upon aspects of the cathedral liturgy performed there. The north porch provided the main point of entry for the canons, whose residence was located in a precinct north of the cathedral church. The canons processed through the porch and then immediately east up the north nave aisle through the choir screen.⁷⁴ The radical sculptural enrichment of the north porch, with *en delit* shafts, syncopated arches and an orgy of bestial sculpture, served to demarcate it as a sacred point of entry. Although it is now devoid of monumental sculpture, the north porch originally housed an elaborate sculptural ensemble of Christ in Majesty, with Christ positioned on the (now 14th-century) trumeau and the twelve evangelists located in the flanking niches on the lateral walls (Fig. 29).⁷⁵ The north porch programme must have provided a magnificent

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FIG. 29. Wells cathedral: north porch interior
Malcolm Thurlby

point of entry into the Heavenly Jerusalem, which had its most local precedent in the south porch at Malmesbury.⁷⁶ This message for the canons was also articulated in the capital sculpture: the capitals flanking the inner door, to the immediate left and right of the former image of Christ on the trumeau, have representations of a canon and an archbishop: the prelate raises his hand perpetually to bless the canons entering into the cathedral and the canon bears a scroll inscribed with *INTRAVIT INTER GAUDIUM DEI TUI* ('enter thou into the blessedness of God') derived from Matthew 25:23, thus commenting specifically upon the liminal space of the porch as a place of entry into the Heavenly Jerusalem (Figs 30, 31).

It is undoubtedly significant that the majority of texts in the sculpture were located in the transepts flanking the choir, east of the choir screen, where they would have been viewed by the Wells canons. For example, it has hitherto been overlooked that the vault corbels on the west walls of the transepts bear hagiographic imagery that reflects the dedications to the altars in the east-facing transept chapels. On the south side, an elegant representation of St Katherine with a dove whispering in her ear is accompanied by the text: *VIRGO SA: KATERINA*, which signals the position of the altar to St Katherine in the adjacent transept chapel (Fig. 32).⁷⁷ The form of this capital invites comparison



FIG. 30. Wells cathedral: north porch capital (archbishop blessing)

Matthew M. Reeve

FIG. 31. Wells cathedral: north porch capital (canon with scroll)

Matthew M. Reeve



with an analogously positioned corbel in the north transept which bears a seated figure with a devil whispering in his ear. The abacus above the figure bears the text EGEAS, which indicates that the capital derives from the hagiography of Wells's patron saint, St Andrew, in which the Roman consul Egeas is destroyed by devils for ordering Andrew's death (Fig. 33).⁷⁸



FIG. 32. Wells cathedral: north transept, St Katherine corbel

Matthew M. Reeve



FIG. 33. Wells cathedral: south transept, Egeas corbel

Matthew M. Reeve

The prophets in the canonical spaces of the cathedral likewise suggest liturgical themes. The figure of Moses in the north transept holds the tablets of the law inscribed with the text *LEGE DEI*, and points south-east toward the position of the high altar (Fig. 27). The prophet Daniel, now hidden behind the Bubwith chantry chapel, pivots at the waist and points with his right arm over his left shoulder eastwards, likewise signalling the high altar (Fig. 28). Typical of the role of prophets in Gothic art, the Wells prophets signified the Old Testament prophecy of the coming of Christ, thereby knitting together the Old and New Testaments. In the physical space of the cathedral, they also alluded to the sacred passage through the building toward the high altar, and the implied temporal and spiritual passage from Old Testament expectation to New Testament fulfilment through the reunion of the worshipper with Christ during the eucharist. A lengthy tradition in medieval thought, expressed through liturgy and performance and expounded in liturgical commentaries, considered contemporary canons to be the typological successors to the Old Testament priesthood, since both anticipate the coming of Christ (the Incarnation and Last Judgement respectively). In this sense the prophets may have represented parallels of contemporary clerical endeavour, not unlike their better-known successors on the vaults of Salisbury Cathedral.⁷⁹

Aspects of the sculptural decoration were thus geared to comment upon and guide aspects of the canons' liturgical activities. However, these capitals would seem to represent only specific signs within a broader arena of signage and they do little to change the picture of a miscellaneous collection of imagery in the lay and clerical spaces of the cathedral. In line with typical studies of religious 'mentalities', we should like to be able to fall back upon a full library of books that could provide an account of the literary tastes of the Wells canons. Unfortunately, little is known of the Wells library in the 12th and early 13th centuries.⁸⁰ Unlike Canterbury, Lincoln or Salisbury, Wells was not an important intellectual centre, although it did boast a course of lectures in the later 12th century and held a handful of important figures in the *familia* of Bishop Reginald, who in turn had been an associate of Thomas Becket.⁸¹

Alexander of Bath, dean of Wells and member of Reginald's *familia*, composed the *Moralia Super Evangelia*, a miscellaneous text on sin and correction, which drew broadly on the Bible, the writings of the fathers, bestiary, the lapidary, the sermons of Stephen Langton, the writings of William of Montibus (of Lincoln) and recent theological speculations from the schools of Paris. Alexander's audience was clerical: he wrote for a 'vir theologus litteratus et prudens' in order to teach morality and admonish sin.⁸² The *Moralia* was to be an important source for later writers of pastoral and didactic theology, notably the author of the *Ancrene Wisse*. Probably written in the early years of the 13th century (thus after the beginning of the sculpture itself), the *Moralia* cannot be considered a 'source' for the Wells capitals, even if it does share much in common with them in terms of arrangement and content. It may suggest, however, a more meaningful way to understand how Wells's clerical *eruditi* could have read the imagery.

The miscellaneous collection of evidence and advice from a range of sources in the *Moralia* (many of which were also mined as visual sources for the capitals, such as the bestiary) suggests an analogy to the mode of reading images. Reading through the rhythmic hexameters of the text would have prepared the canons for interface with a similarly miscellaneous and rhythmic collection of images in the cathedral, each suggestive of a range of possible sources and didactic meanings. Beside providing structural analogies between modes of interpretation, such sources could have also informed the canons' interpretation of individual images: the representations of animals in the

capitals for instance would certainly have recalled the range of spiritual and moral meanings of these beasts found in the *Moralia*, many of which were cribbed from the bestiary. The *Moralia* was of course only one of a range of possible texts, including collections of *exempla* and proverbs, sermon aids and didactic treatises produced as *pastoralia* during the Interconciliar period (1179–1215) which may have suggested this mode of reading and cognition.⁸³ These texts are suggestive of a late-12th-century approach to religious and classical authorities based largely on the cultures of the schools, in which authors sought to gather, organise and harmonise the legacy of the Christian past to make it accessible for study and explication.⁸⁴

The connection between the Wells capitals and contemporary literature is also of interest in underlining a point I have made throughout this paper: ‘Romanesque’ and back-dated though they may have seemed to modern commentators, the Wells capitals were in fact absolutely in keeping with current trends in pastoral theology. In other words, there was probably nothing ‘old fashioned’ about their iconography in the minds of clerical contemporaries; on the contrary, they referenced current discourses which were *au courant* to Wells’s *eruditi*.

The laity as audience

UNLIKE the cathedral canons, the laity would have accessed the cathedral through the west façade and principally used the nave space. The image of a highly ordered history of salvation on the west façade of c. 1220–50 reflects a very different vision for the cathedral than that manifest in the earlier campaigns. Nevertheless there is every reason to suggest that the lay public of the Wells capitals gazed at them with the same un-informed wonder of the lay public today. Indeed, the functions of the nave space, which could be religious, commercial, and festive, allowed for a variety of opportunities for looking at the imagery outside the more fixed liturgical movements of the eastern arm. Lay viewers in particular must have gazed with wonder upon the sculptures, since they would probably have been the only large-scale carved images available to them in the city of Wells in the years around 1200.

Unfortunately we know much less about the laity of Wells in the period than we would like, although our knowledge does increase exponentially in the later Middle Ages.⁸⁵ Illiterate though many of the laity probably were, it would be a mistake to suggest that they had no access to literate cultures. Historians no longer doubt the deep penetrations of literary cultures into lay society in the high and later Middle Ages and much work has been published in the past decades problematising literate and illiterate modes of viewing, which dissolves what now seem antiquated models for ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture in the Middle Ages.⁸⁶ Arguably, the illiterate or partially literate status of the laity might well have made them more active listeners and assimilators of spoken or seen texts. As Gary Shaw has recently reminded us in his study of the medieval city of Wells, its citizens (and especially its burgesses) were ‘just the right kind to receive the maximum exposure to clerical culture and its productions’ through sermons, mercantile interaction and, of course, direct visual contact with the fabric of the cathedral itself.⁸⁷

We have seen already that animal imagery characterised much of the nave space. While the illustrated bestiary must have provided the source for some of the sculptures, it is unlikely that the bestiary directly informed lay perceptions of the images. The bestiary, not unlike the images of animals and hybrids based upon it, was a product of the religious imagination of the monastery, where it served as a devotional text that allowed monks to consider the manifold typological meanings of the natural universe

for an understanding of the Godhead.⁸⁸ The earliest evidence for lay ownership of the bestiary dates to the early 13th century, probably around the time the Wells capitals were finished.⁸⁹ As such, at the time of their execution at least, lay understanding of these images was almost certainly mediated through clerical productions such as sermons, other works of visual art, and, perhaps, non-clerical productions such as folklore. Put differently, if these images had a specific meaning in the minds of individual lay viewers, it was almost certainly a meaning dictated by the church.

Many of the carved animals are in active conflict with other beasts or with humans. As we have seen, many of these creatures were hybrids, a category of medieval image that has received much recent attention in scholarship on monastic art, in which they have been understood as allegories of the mixed nature (*persona mixta*) of the human character.⁹⁰ As I have frequently warned, however, this perspective may be well suited to the monastery, but it probably had little to do with lay responses within a secular cathedral. S9 features a man with a hoe who is attacked from behind by a lion. Were this image to be explained in the context of a sermon, for instance, it is likely that an interlocutor familiar with the Bible would indicate that this image referenced a pictorialisation of Psalm 7:2–3: ‘Oh Lord my God, I have put my hope in you. Save me from those who pursue me and deliver me so that they might not seize my soul like a lion at a time when there is no one to rescue or save me’. Similar iconography for Psalm 7 was employed in monastic manuscripts such as the Utrecht Psalter and the *Moralia in Job*.⁹¹ Without awareness of specific texts, it is perhaps more likely that the lay viewer would have interpreted these images as traditional allegories of the battle of good versus evil within the viewer’s soul, and the imperative to defend himself daily against exterior assault. Based ultimately in scripture, such as Ephesians 6:11 (‘Be strengthened in the Lord [...] put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil’), the allegorisation of man’s interior state as a constant battle between good and evil had a long history in monastic art and thought and was central to the pastoral mission directed at the laity during the later 12th century in the context of the secular church.⁹² Knowledge of this basic context can be assumed among the laity, since it featured in a range of liturgical and para-liturgical texts of the period, as well as in contemporary *pastoralia*.⁹³

Fortunately there is some evidence for how the lay space of the cathedral was used. Before 1180, Bishop Reginald forbade fairs to take place within the cathedral precincts because the tumult of buying and selling had proven a distraction to worshippers and had threaten to make the House of God into a house of commerce.⁹⁴ There is no reason to doubt that Reginald’s vision for the cathedral as a devotional space that was cleansed of commercial endeavour was put into effect. Indeed, his prescriptions provide one avenue for interpreting the overt didacticism of the nave sculpture. It is less clear, however, that this was sustained. Dean Haselshaw’s 1298 statutes provide a retrospective commentary on a history of the abuse of the nave space by the laity. The statutes impose new prohibitions on the ‘secular’ uses of the nave, including games, spectacles, and commerce, which, because they were specifically mentioned, must have been taking place with some frequency. The statutes also demanded increasing order in the nave and a more rigid separation between the nave and choir, which was apparently breached by the laity more often than was deemed appropriate by the canons.⁹⁵

Whatever the original uses of the nave, the thrust behind the imagery at Wells was overwhelmingly didactic in character, apparently providing a visual exegesis on sin and correction. The sculptures can, I believe, be readily understood as plastic translations of a range of pastoral ideas prevalent during the Interconciliar period, which promoted

and disseminated a new regime of pastoral care and religiosity to the clergy so that it could be passed to the laity.⁹⁶ If this was the intention of the sculpture, then it is interesting to note that it either did not have this effect for long, or that it failed to suggest models of proper comportment and spirituality, as the 1298 statutes would seem to suggest. Indeed, whatever the meanings of the original capital sculptures to their lay audience, their significance was seen to be inferior to the need to commemorate the dead by the 15th century, when the Bubwith and Sugar chantry chapels were built in the eastern nave bays, obscuring some of the capitals.

CONCLUSIONS

WELLS cathedral is an important building for the historian of medieval art and architecture because it consistently challenges many of the assumptions that we bring to bear upon its study. This study reinforces a point that has been increasingly clear in recent decades in the study of medieval buildings: the importance of interpreting buildings on an institution-by-institution basis, thereby fragmenting the homogeneity imposed by formalist labels of style. The specific case presented here for the Wells sculpture as a product of a dominant atelier of sculptors may be as difficult to parallel in other buildings as the capitals themselves are, where fundamentally different institutional and artistic dynamics were at play.

The the major goal of this paper has been to attempt to understand the role of the capital sculpture of Wells within the architectural, masonic and performative contexts of the cathedral. I have argued against the existing scholarship on Wells that has sought to isolate the sculpture from its architectural setting, in the belief that any assessment of Wells cathedral, or more broadly 'early Gothic architecture', would need to take full account of the building's imagery, its idioms and traditions as much as the 'architecture' of the building itself. It is our own paradigms rather than anything inherent in the physicality of the monuments themselves that have 'marginalised' the Wells capitals.

Although deriving from a tradition of ornamental elaboration in the monastery, it seems clear that the sculpture at Wells would not have been consumed and appreciated in the same ways as it was within the monastic enclosure. Whether designed principally by the cathedral's masons, as I have suggested, or its patrons, the sculpture nevertheless could be intelligible and meaningful within the intellectual and social contexts of the secular church. It has been possible in this paper only to suggest some avenues for interpreting aspects of the capital sculpture, and to propose ways in which it could be located within the narratives of the great church itself. In so doing, I trust I have clarified as much as complicated Wells's famous but hitherto unexplored ensemble of carved imagery.

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APPENDIX: SCULPTURE CATALOGUE

All numbers follow Gardner, *Wells Capitals* (as n. 7). The compass points refer to the position on the capital of the individual sculpture. For the sake of brevity, the catalogue lists only figural sculpture and does not reference foliage designs. Footnotes have been used here only to supplement material not considered in the body of the essay.

NORTH SIDE

North porch

Façade panels

East: Sampson and the lion.

West: winged dragon or griffon standing on foliage.

Capitals

East: martyrdom of Saint Edmund, king and martyr.⁹⁷

1–3: the martyrdom.

4: Edmund's wife (crowned) stoops over and holds his head.

5 (outer): Edmund's head guarded by the wolf.

5 (inner): two men kneel over something now destroyed by the position of the former door, perhaps the body of St Edmund. God's hand descends from the clouds in a sign of blessing.

6 (inner): a largely destroyed dragon or lizard that points toward the inner door.

West: foliage.

Inner door

East: vested canon bearing scroll with INTRAVIT INTER GAUDIUM DEI TUI (cf. Matthew 25:33).

West: bishop in pontificals making a sign of blessing.

Nave

N1: foliage.

N2: foliage.

N3SW: two-bodied lion positioned on the corner looking down into nave space.

N3S: dragons facing each other, eating leaves, heads pointing downwards, tails split into foliage.

N3NE: female head emerging from foliage facing NE up the aisle.

N4SW: two symmetrically positioned birds facing each other.

N4NW: two dragon-headed birds positioned symmetrically, back to back, with tails that terminate in foliage.

N4 (aisle respond capital): double-bodied lion with one head (similar to N3SW).

N5S: two birds symmetrically positioned back to back with homonid (ape?) face between.

N5N: two birds facing each other with heads turned back to preen wing feathers.

N5 (aisle respond capital): from left to right, a man leans over a dead cow and a large human head eats its hoof; a small man holds another hoof, to his left a dog; a hooded figure holds the hind legs of a sheep.

N6N: two human-headed hybrids (basilisks). The left figure is male and the right is female; each are biting foliage, left one wearing a crown or headdress and right one with wrinkled face and hood.

N6S: damaged figure with head now lost.

N7W: basilisk with human head and the body of a bird with a serpentine tail, wearing crown and holding a dagger (or sceptre), pointing into nave space. Positioned immediately opposite west door.

N7NW: ram with curled horns grazing on foliage facing west.

N7N: two dragons back to back with long tails ending in foliage with grotesque head looks toward door.

N7NE: lion turning head to left looking back over its body preening himself with his tongue, tail between its legs and over its back.

N7S: three heads: grotesque figure with homonid wearing a cowl; a pig; a man.

N7SE: preening birds arranged symmetrically (very similar to N5N).

N7E: winged dragons with tails ending in foliage eating grapes/ foliage.

N8: foliage.

N9W: three birds (apparently doves) eating in foliage and preening themselves.

N9NW: a broken capital with the remains of a serpent's or dragon's tail.

N9NE: a stork (or spoonbill) eating frog (now hidden by chantry chapel).

N9NW: a broken capital that contains the remains of a serpent's or dragon's tail.

N9SE: hybrid human with a fish tail (siren) holding a fish in his left hand a billhook in his right (now hidden behind chantry chapel).

N9SW: a man (seemingly a farmhand) carrying a ball in his left hand and a stick in his right chasing a fox with a goose over his back. This is the earliest representation of the *Ysengrimus*.

N9 (aisle wall respond): a man walking east, wearing a cloak, and carrying an animal over his shoulder.

N10N: a stonemason with a block of stone in a cradle over his right shoulder, holding the strap with his left hand. He has an axe over his left shoulder, held by his right hand, which is encased in a thick glove. The fingers and thumb of the left glove can be seen behind the small box, possibly holding his whetstone. He wears a knee-length gown with a ragged hem and wears a shallow brimmed hat. The figure has been described as a packman but has all the attributes of a stonecutter or mason and can be compared with a number of French 12th-century exemplars.⁹⁸

N10W: a woman spinning, wearing a full-length gown and holding a distaff securely between her knees, with her left hand resting on her knee and the wool thread in her right. The head has been broken off due to the insertion of an iron stay.

N10SW: the prophet Daniel, holding a scroll in his left hand that stretches over his knees: DANIEL is written on it. He looks westward and points over his shoulder eastward with his right hand into the crossing space.

N10SW: the wool-comber, modestly clothed in a full-length gown; her head is covered with a scarf. She is combing a bundle of wool on her right knee.

N10NE: Devil or ape with cloven feet, crouching, hands on knees.

N11NE: male face with round hat and pleasant expression.

N12NE: male face with curly hair and pleasant expression.

N12E: two birds with animal heads, symmetrically placed back to back, with ape face in between.

N12SE: female face covered in a veil, which leaves only the eyes exposed.

Opposite N12 on aisle wall: old man with stick on his shoulder walking east and farmer tending to sheep.

N12SW: ape's head adjacent to male head wearing helmet, mouth awry.

N13N: prophet in the act of writing APA on a scroll: possibly an error for ABACUC. The head appears to be a replacement.

I3NE: prophet wearing a hooded garment with a banner on his cap, writing the following letters on a scroll across his lap with his right hand: IAH. There is a hole in the top of his hood. This may be Isaiah, Jeremiah or Elijah.

N13S: the prophet Aaron. He is holding scroll inscribed with ARON and holds a pen or stylus in his left hand (first 'A' cut away by later clockworks).

N13SE: Moses holding tablets inscribed LEGE DEI in his left hand. His right hand and index finger are pointing to the crossing of the cathedral.

N13NW: prophet with blank scroll.

N14E: male face with downturned mouth.

N14S: man walking east with a goose under his arm.

N14SE: grimacing male head.

N14SW: two human heads.

N15: foliage.

N16E: male face with curly hair and hands in front of his chest.

N16 (aisle wall): lizard corbel halfway up the pillar.

N17NE: young face positioned toward the sanctuary.

N18: foliage.

N19: foliage.

North transept vault corbels (west wall)

North side: Egeas and the devil with the text EGEAS carved on the abacus.

South side: man holding large cross in micro-architectural setting; possibly St Peter or St Dunstan.⁹⁹

SOUTH SIDE

Nave

S1: foliage.

S2: foliage.

S3: foliage.

S4SW: man's face, curly hair and clean-shaven, peering out of foliage.

S5: foliage.

S6NW: bestial head with large ears facing down the nave.

S6N: two winged dragons fighting, one (left) humanoid head pushes a stick into the mouth of the other (right).

S6SE: bestial head with large ears. (Similar to figure on S6NW with hat.)

S7: foliage.

S8NE: hybrid formed of a winged bird with grotesque head and long serpentine tail, which sticks out its tongue (basilisk).

S8SW: winged bird with grotesque head and long serpentine tail, wearing hat (basilisk). The pointed, conical hat and enlarged nose suggests are medieval Christian attributes of Jews: it is possible that anti-Semitism is registered here.

S9NW: bird with long tail ending in foliage.

S9N: two birds symmetrically placed eating foliage.

S9NE: small owl with worm in beak (inside chantry chapel).

S9SE: human-headed creature with club in his right hand and grasping foliage with his right (onocentaur). The figure twists to look down westward down the south nave aisle (inside chantry chapel).

S9SW: lion attacking man from rear; the man raises a hoe above his head. Lion's head missing.

S10: foliage.

S11SE: prophet Elias with banner on his knee inscribed with ELIAS P and his hand on his cheek with a sombre expression.

S11SW: three faces (from right to left): a man's face wearing hood with mouth open; an ape's face with long ears; a male face with curly hair.

S11N: destroyed by the 14th-century scissor arches.

S12W: leather worker with work on left knee, wearing cloth scarf around head and chin. There is a strap around left knee and right foot. The dress and pose mimics the wool-comber.

S12NW: bestial head next to woman with flowing hair.

S12N: damaged figure or head.

S12NE: face with barbed tongue.

S12E: hooded figure with pained expression removed a thorn from his foot (*spinario*).¹⁰⁰

S12SE: mouth puller with the index finger of his left hand in his mouth. He is wearing a pointed hood and his holding his right hand to his chest. He is blind in his right eye.¹⁰¹

S12SW: beast's head with two teeth showing.

- S13SE (the grape stealers capital): scene 1 shows a youth holding a basket of grapes, showing traces of red paint with an older man holding a billhook in his right hand and a bunch of grapes in his left. He is looking over his shoulder.
- S13NE: grape stealers, scene 2, showing labourer telling the farmer of thieves. He points backward with his right hand — he also carries a billhook.
- S13NW: grape stealers, scene 3, showing the farmer apprehending the older man by the hood on his coat. The farmer holds a pitchfork in his right hand; the grape stealer has an apron full of grapes.
- S13SW: grape stealers capital scene 4, where the farmer hits the old man, losing his hat in the process. The thief is sagging at the knees due to the blow, and he is spilling his grapes.
- S14NW: male face with unhappy expression.
- S14NE: bestial head adjacent to an old man's face with moustache and beard.
- S14NW: animal's head wearing a cloak.
- S15: foliage.
- S16: foliage.
- S17SE: two small dragons eating foliage.
- S18: foliage.
- S19: foliage.

South transept vault corbels (west wall)

South side: St Katherine and dove; Katherine holds a scroll with VIRGO SA: KATERINA.

North side: youthful male seated holding a foliate staff in his right hand.

NOTES

1. R. D. R. (full name not supplied), 'Some More Capitals', *Wells Cathedral Friends Report 1948* (Wells 1948), 10–12.
2. See in general J. B. Cameron, 'The Early Gothic Continuous Capital and Its Precursors', *Gesta*, 15 (1976), 143–50.
3. See Jerry Sampson's catalogue in W. Rodwell, *Wells Cathedral: Excavations and Structural Studies, 1978–1993*, 2 vols (London 2001), I, 173–77; II, 423–39. Further spandrels have been recently discovered within walled-up recesses in the building, but they remain unpublished: see below, nn. 42, 45, 54.
4. See most recently J. Sampson, *Wells Cathedral West Front: Construction, Sculpture and Conservation* (London 1998); C. M. Malone, *Façade as Spectacle: Ritual and Ideology at Wells Cathedral* (Leiden and Boston 2004); on the contemporary funerary sculpture, see M. M. Reeve, 'The Retrospective Effigies of Anglo-Saxon Bishops at Wells Cathedral: A Reassessment', *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society*, 142 (1999), 235–59.
5. M. Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (London 2003), 82–83. Remarkably, the Wells sculpture is not considered in A. Woodcock, *Liminal Images: Aspects of Medieval Architectural Sculpture in the South of England from the Eleventh to the Sixteenth Centuries*, British Archaeological Reports, British Series 386 (Oxford 2005).
6. This concept derives from H. Brakspear, 'A West Country School of Masons', *Archaeologia*, 81 (1931), 1–18. The significant recent scholarship on the 'West Country school' includes M. Thurlby, 'The Early Gothic Fabric of Llandaff Cathedral and its Place in the West Country School of Masons', in *Cardiff: Architecture and Archaeology in the Medieval Diocese of Llandaff*, ed. J. Kenyon, *BAA Trans.*, xxix (Leeds 2006), 60–85, and R. Stalley, 'The Architecture of St David's Cathedral', *Antiq. J.*, 82 (2002), 13–45, in which Wells's sleek modernism has correctly been seen as an exception to, rather than a model for, other buildings in the West Country.
7. A. Gardner, *Wells Capitals*, 5th edn (Wells 1978). Some of the capitals were drawn by John Carter (1748–1817): W. Rodwell and G. Leighton, *Architectural Records of Wells by John Carter*, Somerset Record Society 92 (Taunton 2006). For more cursory treatments, see P. Tudor-Craig, 'Wells Sculpture', in, *Wells Cathedral: A Celebration*, ed. L. S. Colchester (Shepton Mallet 1982), 102–31 (at 105–07), and idem, *Wells Cathedral* (London 1987), 95–97. The capitals also feature in the major surveys of medieval sculpture, such as A. Gardner, *English Medieval Sculpture* (Cambridge 1937), 110–14; P. Williamson, *Gothic Sculpture*

1140–1300 (New Haven and London 1998), 106; L. Stone, *Sculpture in Britain: The Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (Harmondsworth 1972), 103–04. See also H. Luttikhuisen and D. Verkerk ed., *Snyder's Medieval Art*, 2nd edn (Upper Saddle River, NJ 2006), 396–98. The capitals are not discussed in such important studies of English medieval art as P. Binski, *Becket's Crown: Art and Imagination in Gothic England 1170–1300* (New Haven, CT and London 2004), which focuses instead on the west façade and the retrospective effigies, and P. Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic: Architecture and Identity* (New Haven and London 2006), 122, where the capitals are considered as diagnostic evidence of stylistic development.

8. Gardner, *Wells Capitals* (as n. 7), 1, suggests that the capitals: ‘occupy a transitional position between the old and the new, between the laboured efforts of the Romanesque tradition striving to express its ideas and evolve new techniques based on old semi-classic methods, and the new gothic freedom and naturalism which experience in cathedral building was putting into men’s hands’. George Zarnecki argued that ‘It would be wrong to assume that sculpture in Early Gothic buildings must necessarily be Gothic, and certainly the earliest capitals of Wells Cathedral [...] combine sculpture based on transitional manuscript models with capitals of a pure Gothic form’: G. Zarnecki, *Studies in Romanesque Sculpture* (London 1979), 152–58. Commenting upon the building alone, John Harvey’s famously nationalistic appraisal of Wells considered it Europe’s first truly Gothic building, which had emancipated itself (sculpture not included) from previous Romanesque traditions: ‘Wells Cathedral, I’, in *Wells Cathedral: A History* (as n. 7), 52–75 (at 53–55). For a recent consideration of the disjunction between medieval art of the 12th century and modern terminology, see W. Sauerlander, ‘Romanesque Art 2000: A Worn Out Notion?’, in *Romanesque: Art and Thought in the Twelfth Century: Essays in Honour of Walter Cahn*, ed. C. Hourihane (Princeton 2008), 40–56.

9. D. Turnbull, *Masons, Tricksters, and Cartographers: Comparative Studies in the Sociology of Scientific and Indigenous Knowledge* (Amsterdam 2000), 53–88.

10. Jerry Sampson has kindly shared his unpublished report on the archaeology of the eastern termination of the building, which when published will significantly change our understanding of its original form. He has published a brief account in the *Friends of Wells Cathedral Journal 2009* (Wells 2009). On the 14th-century remodelling, see P. Draper, ‘The Sequence and Dating of the Decorated Work at Wells’, *Medieval Art and Architecture at Wells and Glastonbury*, ed. N. Coldstream and P. Draper, *BAA Trans.*, IV (Leeds 1981), 18–29.

11. Adjacent to the north-east crossing pier, the well-known ‘Lizard’ corbel is located on the east face of the southernmost pier in the north transept. The archaeology of the corbel suggests that is a later addition. Pevsner links this addition to the fall of the ‘tholus’ in 1248, although the style of the capital would seem to be rather earlier: N. Pevsner, *B/E North Somerset and Bristol* (Harmondsworth 1958), 294.

12. The most thorough account of the chronology of early Gothic Wells is now J. Sampson, *West Front* (as n. 4), ch. 1. A different interpretation of the sequence is in Malone, *Façade as Spectacle* (as n. 4).

13. For a recent discussion of these issues in an English context, see M. M. Reeve, *Thirteenth-Century Wall Painting at Salisbury Cathedral: Art, Liturgy, and Reform* (Woodbridge and New York 2008), 79–103.

14. W. H. St John Hope, ‘Quire Screens in English Churches, with Special Reference to the Twelfth-Century Quire Screen formerly in the Cathedral Church of Ely’, *Archaeologia*, 68 (1917), 43–110; C. M. Church, *Chapters in the Early History of the Church of Wells* (London 1894), 323–24.

15. L. G. Duggan, ‘Was Art Really the “Book of the Illiterate”?’ and ‘Reflections on “Was Art Really the “Book of the Illiterate”’, in *Reading Images and Texts: Medieval Images and Texts as Forms of Communication*, ed. M. Hageman and M. Mostert (Turnhout 2004), 63–107 and 109–19 respectively.

16. For a recent discussion of these issues, see J. Jung, ‘Beyond the Barrier: The Unifying Role of the Choir Screen in Gothic Churches’, *Art Bulletin*, 82 (2000), 622–57.

17. The period in which the sculpture was executed in the second and third phases of the early Gothic fabric does not agree precisely with the tenure of Dean Alexander between c. 1189–1213. Alexander made generous grants toward the work, which led Armitage Robinson to consider him the major force behind the work during the tenure of the absentee bishop Savaric (1192–1205). J. A. Robinson, *Somerset Historical Essays* (London 1921), 54–72.

18. J. H. Harvey, *English Mediaeval Architects: A Biographical Dictionary Down to 1550*, 2nd edn (Gloucester 1986), 185. Sampson, following Thurlby, has suggested that he was the master of the earlier phases of Wells in the western parts of the transepts, the eastern bays of the nave and the north porch, thus implicating him in the figural sculpture. See Sampson, *West Front* (as n. 4), 49–51, 75, 77, and M. Thurlby, ‘The Elder Lady Chapel at St Augustine’s, Bristol, and Wells Cathedral’, in *Almost the Richest City: Bristol in the Middle Ages*, ed. L. Keen, *BAA Trans.*, XIX (1997), 31–40.

19. See the pamphlet by G. A. Wright, *Masons Marks on Wells Cathedral Church* (Wells 1970), and Sampson, *West Front* (as n. 4), 20.

20. Sampson, *West Front* (as n. 4), 56–57.

21. There is very little documentary evidence for contemporary sculptural production. As Jean Givens has shown for Exeter a century later, capitals and bosses were carved off site and shipped in from local workshops.

J. A. Givens, 'The Fabric Accounts of Exeter Cathedral as a Record of Medieval Sculptural Practice', *Gesta*, 30 (1991), 112–18. The exception that proves the rule is pier N₁₃ which, for reasons that are not clear, is formed of cardinal capitals with diagonals attached on the left rather than the right. Although adhering to this basic methodology, piers N₁₂ and S₁₂ have a slight deviation in the capital forms because they bore the springing of strengthened vault ribs to support the weight of the original central tower.

22. On contemporary mason-craft, I am indebted to C. R. Dodwell, 'The Meaning of "Sculptor" in the Romanesque Period', in *Romanesque and Gothic: Essays for George Zarnecki*, ed. N. Stratford (Woodbridge 1987), 49–62; P. G. Lindley, *Making Medieval Art* (Donnington 2003), 54–80 ('Gothic Sculpture: Studio and Workshop Practices'); D. Knoop and G. P. Jones, *The Mediaeval Mason* (Manchester 1949).

23. Gardner, *Wells Capitals* (as n. 7), and Stone, *Sculpture in Britain* (as n. 7), 103–04. For a recent account of the authority of sculptors in the creation of English architectural sculpture, see Woodcock, *Liminal Images* (as n. 5), 31–32.

24. For further speculations on the roles of patrons and masons in English medieval architecture, see R. Gem, 'The Bishop's Chapel at Hereford: the Roles of Patron and Craftsmen', in *Art and Patronage in the English Romanesque*, ed. S. Macready and F. H. Thompson (London 1986), 87–96; N. Coldstream, 'Architects, Advisors and Design at Edward I's Castles in Wales', *Architectural History*, 46 (2003), 19–36; C. Wilson, 'Calling the Tune? The Involvement of King Henry III in the Design of the Abbey Church of Westminster', *JBAA*, 161 (2008), 59–93.

25. For the text, see L. F. Salzman, *Building in England Down to 1540: A Documentary History* (Oxford 1952), 376–77.

26. For a recent discussion, see Binski, *Becket's Crown* (as n. 7), 46–51, and particularly the seminal article by Xenia Muratova, 'Vir quidem fallax et falsidicus, sed artifex praecellens: Remarques sur l'image sociale et littéraire de l'artiste au Moyen Âge', in *Artistes, Artisans, et Production Artistique au Moyen Âge*, ed. X. Barral I Altet, 3 vols (Paris 1986), I, 53–72.

27. William's fall from the scaffolding recalls a number of other 'accidents' in the documentary history of medieval art, such as the 'painter and the Devil' narrative represented in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, in which the Painter is knocked from the scaffold by the devil in retribution for making an unseemly image of him. See the Cantigas database: http://csm.mml.ox.ac.uk/index.php?p=poemdata_view&rec=74. I am grateful to Dierdre Jackson for this reference.

28. Salzman, *Building in England* (as n. 25), 377–78.

29. M. R. James, 'Pictor in Carmine', *Archaeologia*, 94 (1951), 141–66.

30. M. Gottleib, 'The Painter's Secret: Invention and Rivalry from Vasari to Balzac', *Art Bulletin*, 84 (2002), 469–90; Dodwell, 'Meaning of "Sculptor"' (as n. 22); P. Frankl, 'The Secret of the Medieval Masons', *Art Bulletin*, 27 (1945), 46–68. For a perceptive overview of artistic personality in the period, see P. G. Lindley, 'The Artist: Institutions, Training and Status', in *The History of British Art 600–1600*, ed. T. Ayers (New Haven, CT 2007), 141–65.

31. Particularly evocative here is Pevsner, *B/E North Somerset* (as n. 11), 297–98.

32. A term borrowed from E. H. Gombrich, *Ideas and Idols, Essays on Values in History and in Art* (London 1994), 65.

33. Turnbull, *Masons, Tricksters* (as n. 9), 55.

34. Brakspear, 'West Country School' (as n. 6), and the references in nn. 6, 35, 36.

35. R. A. Stalley, 'The Medieval Sculpture of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin', *Archaeologia*, 106 (1979), 107–22; C. Tracey, 'Dating the Misericords from the Thirteenth-Century Choir Stalls at Exeter Cathedral', *Medieval Art and Architecture at Exeter Cathedral*, ed. F. Kelly, *BAA Trans.*, XI (Leeds 1991), 180–87; M. Reeve and M. Thurlby, 'King John's Gloriette at Corfe Castle', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 64 (2005), 168–85.

36. The French sources for Wells are emphasised in C. M. Malone, 'West English Gothic Architecture 1175–1250' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1973).

37. Sampson, *West Front* (as n. 4), 74–113 (esp. 74–80). The closest local parallels for the Wells capitals are perhaps the carved capitals from Glastonbury abbey associated with the patronage of Henry of Blois; see G. Zarnecki, 'Henry of Blois as a Patron of Sculpture', in *Art and Patronage in the English Romanesque*, ed. S. Macready and F. H. Thompson, Society of Antiquaries Occasional Paper 8 (London 1986), 159–72.

38. Tudor-Craig, 'Wells Sculpture' (as n. 7), 102.

39. Soissonais sources for the architecture and mouldings rather than the figural sculpture are emphasised in C. M. Malone, 'Cistercian Design in the Choir and Transept of Wells Cathedral', in *Perspectives for an Architecture of Solitude: Essays on Cistercians, Art and Architecture in Honour of Peter Fergusson*, ed. T. N. Kinder, *Medieval Church Studies* 11 (Turnhout 2005), 351–67; eadem, 'West English' (as n. 36), 135–36, 150.

40. Thurlby, 'The Elder Lady Chapel' (as n. 18), citing (at 31) London, British Library, Cotton Charter IV, 58, no. 36.

41. Thurlby, 'The Elder Lady Chapel' (as in n. 18), figs VIIIE and VIIF.
42. D. Kahn, *Canterbury Cathedral and its Romanesque Sculpture* (London 1991), 61; H. Adolf, 'The Ass and the Harp', *Speculum*, 25 (1950), 49–57.
43. Kahn, *Canterbury Cathedral* (as n. 42), fig. 70, col. pl. II. A recently discovered spandrel, presumably from the 'Lady chapel by the cloister', features a cow playing the bells, thus suggesting that animal musicians were known at Wells.
44. Thurlby, 'Elder Lady Chapel' (as n. 18), 36.
45. M. Caviness, *The Early Stained Glass of Canterbury Cathedral Circa 1175–1220* (Princeton 1977); P. Binski and P. Bunker, *Peterborough Cathedral 2001–2006: From Devastation to Restoration* (London 2007); L. Kalinowski, 'The "Frieze" at Malmesbury', in *The Romanesque Frieze and Its Spectator*, ed. D. Kahn (London 1992), 85–96; Reeve, *Wall Painting* (as n. 13).
46. A recently discovered spandrel from the Lady chapel by the cloister features Daniel in the lions' den, although the date of this piece must be at least mid-13th century, thus excluding it from the present paper.
47. T. Ayers, *The Medieval Stained Glass of Wells Cathedral*, 2 vols, *Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi* (Oxford 2004), II, 416.
48. R. Barber, *The Bestiary, being an English version of the Bodleian Library MS Bodley 764* (Woodbridge 1999), 184. For the new full facsimile, see C. de Hamel ed., *Book of Beasts: A Facsimile of MS Bodley 764* (Oxford 2008).
49. Barber, *The Bestiary* (as n. 48), 131–32.
50. For the classic statement of the reliance of visual art on bestiary models, see G. Druce, 'Bestiaries and their Influence on Ecclesiastical Decorative Art (Parts 1 and 2)', *JBAA*, n.s. 25 (1919), 41–82; n.s. 26 (1920), 35–79.
51. R. Baxter, *Bestiaries and their Users in the Middle Ages* (Stroud 1998); J. Morson, 'English Cistercians and the Bestiary', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 39 (1956), 146–70; N. J. Morgan, 'Pictured Sermons in Thirteenth-Century England', in *Tributes to Jonathan J. G. Alexander: The Making and Meaning of Illuminated Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts, Art and Architecture*, ed. E. L'Engle and G. B. Guest (London 2007), 323–40.
52. W. J. Travis, 'Of Sirens and Onocentaurs: A Romanesque Apocalypse at Montceaux l'Etoile', *Artibus et Historiae*, 45 (2002), 29–52; J. Le Clercq-Marx, 'Du Monstre androcéphale au monster humanise: A propos des sirens et des centaures, et de leur famille, dans le haut Moyen Âge et à l'époque romane', *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, 45 (2002), 55–67; idem, *La Sirene dans la Pensee et dans L'Art de L'Antiquite et du Moyen Age* (Brussels 1997). For a discussion of sirens in English sculpture, see Woodcock, *Liminal Images* (as n. 5), 89–108.
53. K. Varty, *Reynard the Fox: A Study of the Fox in Medieval Art* (Leicester 1967), 37; idem, *Reynard, Renart, Reinaert and Other Foxes in Medieval England: the Iconographic Evidence* (Amsterdam 1999), 36–38. On information about oral traditions vis-à-vis representation, I am indebted to M. Curschmann, 'Oral Tradition in Visual Art: The Romanesque Theodoric', in *Reading Medieval Texts and Images: Medieval Images and Texts as Forms of Communication*, ed. M. Hageman and M. Mostert (Turnhout 2005), 177–205. The choir sculpture at Worcester (1224–32) also featured a scene from Reynard (Varty, *Reynard the Fox*, 37). For connections between Wells and Worcester, see M. Thurlby, 'The Effigy of King John and the Sculpture of the Cathedrals of Wells and Worcester', *Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society*, 3rd series, 10 (1986), 55–58. For a more recent account, see U. Engel, *Worcester Cathedral: An Architectural History* (Chichester 2007), 211–18.
54. J. Mann, 'Proverbial Wisdom in the Ysengrimus', *New Literary History*, 16 (1984), 93–109.
55. L. Randall, 'Exempla as a Source of Gothic Marginal Illumination', *Art Bulletin*, 39 (1957), 97–107. The relationships between sermons and visual art have recently been explored in S. Murray, *A Gothic Sermon: Making A Contract With God, Saint Mary of Amiens* (Berkeley 2004). For an example of the use of visual art in a medieval sermon, see W. Kemp, *The Narratives of Gothic Stained Glass* (Cambridge 1997), 72–73. Notably, other imagery at Wells — the now *ex situ* spandrel featuring the clever fox luring birds — was based upon *exempla* and the bestiary. On the spandrel, see Rodwell, *Wells Cathedral* (as n. 3), II, 423, figs 442, 444. For the *exemplum* tradition, see Randall, 'Exempla' (as above, this note), 103 and fig. 4.
56. W. B. Clark ed. and trans., *The Medieval Book of Birds: Hugh of Fouilloys's Aviarum* (Binghampton, NY 1992), 16.
57. F. C. Tubach, *Index Exemplorum* (Helsinki 1981), no. 5092; T. F. Crane, *The Exempla or Illustrative Stories from the Sermones Vulgares of Jaques de Vitry* (London 1890), no. 298.
58. J. Le Goff, *Time, Work, & Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. A. Goldhammer (Chicago 1982), 58–70.
59. See in particular, R. Bartal, 'The Early Representations of Urban Society in Romanesque Sculpture: The Formation of a New Iconography', *Studi Medievali*, 33 (1992), 109–32; N. Kanaan-Kedar, 'Unnoticed Self-Representations of Romanesque Sculptors in Twelfth-Century France', in *World Art: Themes of Unity and*

Diversity: Acts of the XXVth International Congress of the History of Art, ed. I. Lavin, 3 vols (University Park, PA 1989), II, 487–93; eadem, ‘Les Modillons de Saintonge et du Poitou comme manifestation de la culture laïque’, *Cahiers de la Civilisation Médiévale*, 29 (1986), 311–30. J. J. G. Alexander, ‘Labour and Paresse: Ideological Representations of Peasant Labor’, *Art Bulletin*, 72 (1990), 436–52; M. Camille, ‘Labouring for the Lord: The Ploughman and the Social Order in the Luttrell Psalter’, *Art History*, 10 (1987), 423–54; M. Rosen, ‘The Republic at Work: S. Marco’s Reliefs of the Venetian Trades’, *Art Bulletin*, 90 (2008), 54–75.

60. G. Shaw, *The Creation of a Community: Wells in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford 1993).

61. F. M. Biscoglio, ‘“Unspun” Heroes: Iconography of the Spinning Woman in the Middle Ages’, *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 25 (1995), 163–84; C. Grewe, ‘Shaping Reality through the Fictive: Images of Women Spinning in the Northern Renaissance’, *Revue d’art canadienne/Canadian Art Review*, 19 (1992), 6–19; M. Camille, ‘At the Sign of the “Spinning Sow”: the “Other” Chartres and Images of Everyday Life of the Medieval Street’, in *History and Images: Towards a New Iconology*, ed. A. Bolvig and P. Lindley (Turnhout 2002), 249–76.

62. Meyer Schapiro’s review of J. C. Webster, *The Labors of the Months in Antique and Medieval Thought to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Princeton 1938), in *Speculum*, 16 (1941), 131; following closely from Schapiro’s classic study ‘From Mozarabic to Romanesque in Silos’, *Art Bulletin*, 21 (1939), 312–74.

63. R. Mellinkoff, ‘The Round-Topped Tablets of the Law: Sacred Symbol and Emblem of Evil’, *Journal of Jewish Art*, 1 (1974), 28–43.

64. For example, J. Lowden, *Illuminated Prophet-books: A Study of Byzantine Manuscripts of the Major and Minor Prophets* (University Park, PA 1988). Tudor-Craig, ‘Wells Sculpture’ (as n. 7), 105, compares the prophets to contemporary Mosan metalwork, notably the clasp figured in K. Hoffmann, *The Year 1200* (New York 1970), 95–96.

65. On mouth pullers, see M. Camille, ‘Mouths and Meanings: Towards an Anti-Iconography of Medieval Art’, in *Iconography at the Crossroads*, ed. B. Cassidy (Princeton, 1993), 43–57. On the *spinario*, see G. Fossi, ‘La Représentation de l’Antiquité dans la sculpture romane et une figuration classique: le Tireur d’Épine’, *La Représentation de l’Antiquité au Moyen Age: Actes du Colloque des 26–28 Mars 1981*, Weiner Arbeiten zur Hermanischen Altertumskunde und Philologie 20 (Vienna 1982); J. Snow-Smith, ‘Brunelleschi’s Competition Panel: The Spinario and the Sin of Heresy’, *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, 113 (1989), 159–69.

66. R. W. Scheller, *Exemplum: Model-Book Drawings and the Practice of Artistic Transmission in the Middle Ages (ca. 900–ca.1450)* (Amsterdam 1995).

67. M. Camille, ‘Gothic Signs and the Surplus: The Kiss on the Cathedral’, *Yale French Studies*, 80 (1991), 151–70.

68. James, ‘Pictor in Carmine’ (as n. 29), 141. *Pictor* may be of special interest in this context. Given the close geographical and stylistic connections between Abbey Dore (where the text is thought to have originated) and Wells, the coincidence of date, and the connections between the author’s description and the Wells sculpture (such as ‘the fabled intrigues of the fox and the cock’), it is very possible that the author, who revised Bernard’s critique, had Wells cathedral in mind as a source for his criticism. Wells provides the closest significant image ensemble to Abbey Dore, making the ambitious new secular church the most likely candidate for critique of ‘improper’ ornament from a Cistercian authority. This observation alone suggests that it is unlikely that there was any significant influence of the architecture of the Cistercian order on early Gothic Wells (see Malone, ‘Cistercian Design’ (as n. 39)).

69. ‘There are in the church painted forms of animals, birds and serpents and other things which are for adornment and beauty only [...] For the house of God must shine with varied worship so that its outward beauty itself will lead men to it, and not inflict weariness on those who are present; it should elevate the mind to heavenly things, representing the beauty of the heavenly home by striving for its beauty’: C. Gilbert, ‘A Statement of the Aesthetic Attitude around 1230’, *Hebrew University Studies in Literature and the Arts*, 13 (1985), 136–37. See subsequently, idem, *The Saints’ Three Reasons for Paintings in Churches* (Ithaca, NY 2001).

70. For recent scholarship on medieval sculpture and audiences, see *inter alia* the essays in Kahn, *The Romanesque Frieze* (as n. 45); K. R. Matthews, ‘Reading Romanesque Sculpture: The Iconography and Reception of the South Portal Sculpture at Santiago de Compostela’, *Gesta*, 39 (2000), 3–12; N. Rowe, ‘Synagoga Tumbles, A Rider Triumphs: Clerical Viewers and the Fürstenportal of Bamberg Cathedral’, *Gesta*, XLV (2006), 15–42; M. Davis, ‘Canonical Views: the Theophilus Story and the Choir Reliefs at Notre-Dame, Paris’, in *Reading Medieval Images: The Art Historian and the Object*, ed. E. Sears and T. K. Thomas (Michigan 2002), 103–16.

71. The scholarship is now extensive. I borrow the phrase from L. Seidel, ‘Medieval Cloister Carving and the Monastic Mentality’, in *The Medieval Monastery*, ed. A. Macleish, *Medieval Studies at Minnesota* 2 (St Cloud, MN 1988), 1–16. Some of the most significant subsequent scholarship includes eadem, *Legends in Limestone: Lazarus, Gislebertus, and the Cathedral of Autun* (Chicago 1999); L. Rutchick, ‘Sculpture Programs

in the Moissac Cloister: Benedictine Culture, Memory Systems, and Liturgical Practice', 2 vols (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Chicago, 1991); I. H. Forsyth, 'Narrative at Moissac: Schapiro's Legacy', *Gesta*, 41 (2002), 71–93. K. Ambrose, *The Nave Sculpture of Vézelay: The Art of Monastic Viewing* (Toronto 2006).

72. E. Mâle, *Religious Art in France: The Twelfth Century*, trans. M. Matthews (Princeton 1978), 364.

73. S. Fish, *Is there a Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA 1980); cited and discussed in this context in W. Cahn, 'Romanesque Sculpture and the Spectator', *The Romanesque Frieze* (as n. 45), 46.

74. The capitals in the north nave arcade feature a range of figures progressing east and west, some carrying animals or sacks. It is possible that these figures represent mirror the liturgical processions of the cathedral canons.

75. Sampson, *West Front* (as n. 4), 77.

76. Kalinowski, 'The "Frieze" at Malmesbury' (as n. 45).

77. Saint Katherine was a later addition to the Wells Anglo-Saxon calendar: see F. Wormald ed., *English Calendars before A.D. 1100*, The Henry Bradshaw Society 72 (London 1934), 110.

78. A very different version of this scene is represented in W. S. Cook, 'The Earliest Painted Panels of Catalonia (IV)', *Art Bulletin*, 8 (1926), 195–234.

79. Reeve, *Wall Painting* (as n. 13), 85–90, 109–14.

80. R. Birley, 'The Cathedral Library', in *Wells Cathedral* (as n. 7), 204–11, and J. P. Carley, 'John Leland at Somerset Libraries', *Somerset Archaeology and Natural History*, 129 (1985), 141–54.

81. Bishop Reginald even owned relics of St Thomas: see T. P. F. Hoving, 'A Newly Discovered Reliquary of St. Thomas Becket', *Gesta* (1956), 28–29. The fullest account of Reginald's life and career is still C. M. Church, 'Reginald, Bishop of Bath (1174–1191): His Episcopate, and his Share in the Building of the Church of Wells', *Archaeologia*, 50 (1887), 295–360.

82. E. J. Dobson, *Moralities on the Gospels: A New Source of Ancren Wisse* (Oxford 1975), 101.

83. L. Boyle, 'The Inter-Conciliar Period 1179–1215 and the Beginnings of Pastoral Manuals', in *Miscellanea Rolando Bandinelli, Papa Alessandro III*, ed. F. Liotta (Siena 1985), 45–56; R. Rouse and M. A. Rouse, *Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons: Studies on the Manipulus Florum of Thomas of Ireland*, Studies and Texts [of the] Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies 47 (Toronto 1979), esp. 3–90; eadem, 'The Florilegium Anglicanum: Its Origin, Content, and Influence', in *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt*, ed. J. J. G. Alexander and M. T. Gibson (Oxford 1976), 66–114; B. Taylor, 'Medieval Proverb Collections: the West European Tradition', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 55 (1992), 19–35.

84. R. H. Rouse and M. A. Rouse, 'Statim invenire: Schools, Preachers, and New Attitudes to the Page', in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. R. L. Benson, G. Constable and C. D. Lanham (Toronto 1991), 201–28, esp. 201.

85. D. G. Shaw, *Creation of a Community* (as n. 59); idem, *Necessary Conjunctions: the Social Self in Late Medieval England* (New York 2005).

86. Duggan, 'Was Art Really' (as n. 15), esp. 102–03; H. M. Thomas, 'Lay Piety in England from 1066 to 1215', in *Anglo-Norman Studies*, XXXIX, ed. C. P. Lewis (Woodbridge 2006), 179–92.

87. Shaw, *Necessary Conjunctions* (as n. 84), 22.

88. On these issues, see C. de Hamel, 'Introduction', in *The Book of Beasts* (as n. 48); Morgan, 'Pictured Sermons' (as n. 51).

89. R. Baxter, 'A Baronial Bestiary: Heraldic Evidence for the Patronage of MS Bodley 764', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 50 (1987), 196–200.

90. See most recently T. Dale, 'Monsters, Corporeal Deformities, and Phantasms in the Cloister of Cuxa', *Art Bulletin*, 83 (2001) 402–36; idem, 'The Monstrous', in *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. C. Rudolph (Malden, MA 2006), 253–73; T. A. Heslop, 'Contemplating Chimera in Medieval Imagination: St Anselm's Crypt at Canterbury', *Raising the Eyebrow: John Onians and World Art Studies*, ed. L. Golden, British Archaeological Reports, International Series 996 (Oxford 2001), 153–68.

91. For the imagery of this Psalm in the *Moralia in Job* and the Utrecht Psalter, see C. Rudolph, *Violence and Daily Life: Reading, Art, and Polemics in the Citeaux Moralia in Job* (Princeton 1997), 36–37.

92. K. Openshaw, 'Weapons in the Daily Battle: Images of the Conquest of Evil in the Early Medieval Psalter', *Art Bulletin*, 75 (1993), 17–38; M. W. Evans, 'An Illustrated Fragment of Peraldus's *Summa* of Vice: Harleian MS 3244', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 45 (1982), 14–46. Notably the *scutum fidei* had an early appearance in the *Moralia Super Evangelia*.

93. Boyle, 'The Inter-Conciliar Period' (as n. 83).

94. Church, 'Reginald, Bishop of Bath' (as n. 81), 311, appendix c.

95. Church, *Chapters in the Early History* (as n. 14), 324–25. For further discussion of this and other documentary evidence related to screen and enclosures in English medieval churches, see P. Draper, 'Enclosures and Entrances in English Medieval Cathedrals: Access and Security', in *The English Medieval Cathedral: Papers in Honour of Pamela Tudor-Craig*, ed. J. Backhouse (Donington 2003), 76–88.

96. Boyle, 'The Inter-Conciliar Period' (as n. 83).

97. The iconography can be closely compared to the following St Edmund cycles: C. Hahn, 'Perigrinatio et Natio: The Illustrated Life of St Edmund, King and Martyr', *Gesta*, 30 (1991), 119–39; M. Roberts, 'The Effigy of Hugh de Northwold in Ely Cathedral', *Burlington Magazine*, 130 (1988), 77–84. The reason for Edmund's prominent position at the north door is unclear, although he naturally features in Wells's 11th-century calendar: Wormald, *English Kalendars* (as n. 77), 110.

98. Cf. Kenaan-Kedar, 'Unnoticed Self-Representations' (as n. 59).

99. Tudor-Craig, 'Wells Sculpture' (as n. 7), 105.

100. Camille identified the capital with Marcolf, the trickster who mixed words with Solomon, apparently on the basis of Peter Kidson's identification of the thorn-puller below the jamb sculpture of Solomon at Chartres with Marcolf. Camille, *Image on the Edge* (as n. 5), 82; P. Kidson, *Sculpture at Chartres* (London 1958), 63 n. 25. While an allusion to Marcolf may have been relevant at Chartres due to the Solomon figure above, it is less clearly appropriate at Wells, and the figure appears to represent a common type of *spinario*. For traditions of representing Marcolph in medieval art, see most recently M. Curschmann, 'Marcolph or Aesop? The Question of Identity in Visio-Verbal Contexts', in *Studies in Iconography*, 21 (2000), 1–45, which includes references to previous literature. On the *spinario* in medieval art, see above, n. 65.

101. Camille has rightly disputed the claim that the capital is reflective of the miracle-working tomb of Bishop Bitton, who enjoyed some local fame as a healer of toothache: cf. Camille, *Image on the Edge* (as n. 5), 82; Tudor-Craig, 'Wells Sculpture' (as n. 7), 105.