Questions of sculptural idiom in the later bosses from Norwich Cathedral cloister (c.1411-1430)

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September 2019

This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Declaration

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the preface and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other university or similar institution except as declared in the preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other university or similar institution except as declared in the preface and specified in the text.

It does not exceed 80,000 words.

Word count: 71,588 words.

Signed

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September 2019
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This thesis focusses on the sculptural vault bosses from Norwich Cathedral cloister, particularly those of the later campaigns (c.1411-1430). This substantial series of bosses has long been acknowledged to be noteworthy, but, whilst the they have been subjected to iconographical, archaeological, chemical, and anthropological analyses, the bosses have never been the subject of serious art-historical study. The later bosses are particularly distinctive in their sculptural manner: they are emphatically convex, swelling downwards and curving upwards into the nooks of space between the vault ribs, every facet crammed with complex detail. Some are wildly distortive, bending, twisting and compressing forms to form aggregate hemispheres out of a jumble of constituent elements. All enjoy the tension created when organic shapes are forced to conform to a governing, hemispherical ‘frame’.

Attention has already been paid to the question of what the bosses depict, and when they were carved. But almost none has been paid to the question of how they depict it, nor how this relates to aesthetic traditions locally, nationally or internationally, nor how they were carved, nor how they were engaged with by their viewers. This thesis aims to fill these gaps. The first part of the thesis focusses on chronology, situating the later Norwich cloister bosses within a longer history of curvaceous boss sculpture. The second part is concerned with questions of facture, considering the careers and methods of the carvers who worked at Norwich before ‘zooming out’ to consider the production of comparable objects in other media. The third and final part is concerned with questions of reception and interpretation; it aims to find less anachronistic concepts with which to understand this distinctive sculptural mode, and to revise some existing art-historical assumptions around issues of perspective, mobile spectatorship and sculptural space.

Robert Hawkins
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I am enormously grateful to Paul Binski for four years of supervision and friendship: wise and witty, humorous and humane, generous and inspiring, he was always ready to show how craft can turn crisis into creativity.

Donal Cooper and Richard Marks read my interim reports and offered invaluable advice and suggestions. Fellow doctoral students Anya Burgon, Amy Jeffs, Christina Faraday, and Rebecca Tropp were constant sources of encouragement, inspiration and camaraderie. Anya and I co-convened the 2019 ‘Kataskopos’ workshop at the University of Cambridge, and our preparatory discussions were very useful in shaping my ideas; Amy convened the 2018 British Art Studies ‘Conversation Piece’ in which I was able to publish a short reflection on photogrammetric modelling. Junior Research Fellows James Hillson and Gabriel Byng discussed my ideas with me as they developed and made pertinent suggestions. Conversations about the Norwich bosses with Sandy Heslop, Lloyd de Beer, Julian Luxford, Sarah Guerin, Martial Rose, Julia Hedgecoe, Caroline van Eck, Tom Nickson, and Nicky Zeeman were all of great value. The 2018 conference ‘New Directions in the Study of Medieval Sculpture’, at the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, offered me an ideal opportunity to present some of my developing ideas and I am grateful for the feedback I received.

For access to sites and permission to photograph artefacts I am grateful to Norwich Cathedral, St Helens’ Great Hospital (particularly Andrew Barnes), and the Victoria and Albert Museum (particularly Nick Humphrey). For correspondence and suggestions of literature I am indebted to Ingmar Reesing, Peter Carpreau, Michaela Zöschg, Agata Gomółka, and Zachary Stewart.

My debt to my wife Fran grows daily, and, if it weren’t for the fact that I am sure she is sick of my thesis by now, I would dedicate this to her.
Such illusions, depending on how the eye is placed and used, drive home the truth that our habitual vision of things is not necessarily right: it is only one of an infinite number, and to glimpse an unfamiliar one, even for a moment, unmakes us, but steadies us again.

Nan Shepherd, The Living Mountain
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Photogrammetric models

In the course of my research I produced a number of photogrammetric models, which served to record the forms of the most complex and interesting bosses for reference off-site, and function now as explanatory aids, allowing me to convey something of their sculptural complexity to others. These models are hosted online, on the widely-used ‘Sketchfab’ platform: see https://sketchfab.com/robhawkins. They are discussed in my ‘Introduction’ (pp.14-15), and are referred to in the text where relevant by the numerals given below.

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Introduction

The Benedictine priory at Norwich Cathedral rebuilt its cloister in a number of campaigns between 1297 and 1430, replacing a Romanesque cloister with a Gothic one. The new cloister comprises 47 bays, each vaulted in the same tierceron-star vault pattern, with sculpted bosses at every rib junction: there are 9 bosses per bay and 376 in the whole cloister - a prodigious quantity of sculptural decoration. Whilst the unchanging vault pattern gives the cloister a uniformity of appearance, there is in fact great variation between the many different campaigns of boss sculpture, in iconography and in sculptural style. The east walk, the first to be vaulted (c.1305-1315), hosts relatively simple jongleuric and foliate bosses, with only a few bays of Passion iconography. The south walk (vaulted c.1325-1330) begins a monumental Apocalypse cycle, but incorporates some foliate and miscellaneous scenes. The west walk (vaulted c.1425-1430) completes the Apocalypse cycle begun in the south, with only minor bosses deviating from this theme, whilst the north walk (vaulted c.1423-1426) completes the Passion narrative begun in the east, leading into a series of Resurrection appearances and a miscellany of highly complex miracles and martyrdoms.

This substantial corpus of bosses has long been acknowledged to be noteworthy: C. J. P. Cave called it ‘undoubtedly the most important series in the country’. And yet, whilst the bosses have been subjected to iconographical, archaeological, chemical, and anthropological analyses, they have never been seriously investigated in terms of their sculptural style. The bosses dating from the later, fifteenth-century campaigns (1411-1430) are particularly distinctive in their sculptural manner. They are emphatically convex, swelling downwards into the cloister and curving back up into the nooks of space between the vault ribs, every facet crammed with sculptural detail. Some are wildly and peculiarly ‘distortive’: bending, twisting and compressing forms to form aggregate

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1 Cave 1948, 12–13.
hemispheres out of a jumble of constituent elements. All seem to enjoy the tension created when organic shapes are forced to conform to a governing, hemispherical ‘frame’.

When this unusual sculptural idiom has been referred to at all it has tended to be in derisive terms. Prior and Gardner noted that the later bosses aspired to ‘storytelling in a small compass’ but condemned their ‘more crowded compositions’, singling out the boss of Herod’s Feast [boss NG4; Model X; Figs.104-107] as an example of a style ‘ineffective, shallow and confused in composition’, ‘very inferior to the earlier carvings’. More recent commentators have echoed their assessment in passing comments. Mostly, however, the sculptural idiom of the bosses has simply escaped discussion. Veronica Sekules nodded to the fact that common iconographies are ‘ingeniously adapted’ to fit the ‘cramped, round space’ of each boss, but no-one has investigated this ‘ingenious adaption’ further. This thesis stems from the conviction that there is more to be said about this distinctive sculptural idiom.

In the historiographical overviews below I set out the existing scholarship, both that focussed on the cloister and that dealing with fifteenth-century English sculpture and the problem of sculptural style more generally. I hope to demonstrate that this thesis fills a significant lacuna, both as a much-needed study of an important sculptural corpus, and as a focussed case-study with broader implications, for fundamental questions around the sculptural representation of space and for paradigms of embodied beholding and mobile viewership as applied to our understanding of medieval artefacts.

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2 Gardner and Prior 1912, 508; Gardner 1951, 253.
3 S. Brown 2018, 92.
4 Sekules 2006, 294. A similarly positive yet brief remark on the quality and complexity of the north walk bosses was made by E. W. Tristram: Cranage and Tristram 1938, 5.
i.1 Historiography

Historiography of the bosses

The earliest studies of the Norwich Cathedral bosses were in an antiquarian mode: Dean Goulburn, for example, gave a general account of dating and iconography of bosses throughout the cathedral.⁵ M. R. James provided a more thorough account of the iconography and made passing comments on the significance of the monument.⁶ E. W. Tristram commented on bosses in the 1930s while undertaking restoration works; his remarks were published alongside a thorough iconographical survey by D. H. S. Cranage, at only slight variance with the earlier account by James.⁷ C. J. P. Cave included the bosses in his far-reaching survey of 1948, but despite asserting their importance Cave did not devote monographic attention to them as he did those at Lincoln, Exeter, Ely and elsewhere.⁸

The documentary sources for the cloister works, primarily the records of construction expenditure in the Obedientiary Rolls, were comprehensively analysed by Eric Fernie and Arthur Whittingham in 1972 (having been only cursorily surveyed in 1876, by Rev. Stewart, and in 1905, by W. H. Jones), who extracted from them a likely sequence of cloister construction but made very few comments on the bosses themselves.⁹ Fernie and Whittingham each revisited the topic in following decades - Fernie in the context of his architectural history of the cathedral, and Whittingham in a small pamphlet dedicated to the bosses and misericords of the cathedral.¹⁰ Each made only small

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⁵ Goulburn and Hailstone 1876.
⁶ James 1911.
⁷ Cranage and Tristram 1938.
⁸ Cave 1948, 12–13. He did focus on the transept bosses of the Cathedral, however: Cave 1933.
⁹ W. H. Jones 1905; Stewart 1876; Fernie and Whittingham 1972.
modifications to the chronology they had proposed in 1972; other minor modifications were suggested by Frank Woodman (and, later, Veronica Sekules).\textsuperscript{11}

The late twentieth-century saw a number of publications focussing solely on the bosses. Martial Rose’s publications summarise and explain the earlier findings for a general audience, setting out the iconography and basic chronology of the cloister’s construction alongside large photographs.\textsuperscript{12} The conservator Tobit Curteis undertook work on the bosses’ polychromy in 1992, and produced a thorough report on its composition and likely history.\textsuperscript{13} Veronica Sekules’ interest in the cloister’s sculpture, beginning in her 1996 piece and culminating in her 2006 article, is largely from an historical/anthropological angle, concerned to set the iconographical programme in the context of socio-economic factors, drawing on the anthropological work of Roberta Gilchrist in order to do so.\textsuperscript{14} Sekules’ attention to the sculpture, however, did enable her to make observations nuancing earlier understandings of the construction sequence.\textsuperscript{15}

More recently, Nigel Morgan sought to examine the relationship between the Apocalypse bosses and possible manuscript models, though these findings remain unpublished.\textsuperscript{16} Paul Binski also offered an account of the fourteenth-century works in his book on the arts in the fourteenth century, \textit{Gothic Wonder}: Binski synthesised the existing scholarship, contributed observations to the understanding of likely chronology, and drew architectural/aesthetic connections between the early cloister works and other monuments both within the cathedral precinct and more broadly in East Anglia, suggesting metropolitan networks of influence.\textsuperscript{17}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} Woodman 1996; Sekules 2006 passim.
\item \textsuperscript{12} Rose 1996; 1997; 1999.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Curteis and Paine 1992.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Sekules 1996; 2006; drawing on Gilchrist 2005.
\item \textsuperscript{15} For example Sekules 2006, 288–89.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Morgan, n.d.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Binski 2014a, 102–14.
\end{itemize}
The sculptural idiom, however, and particularly that of the fifteenth-century bosses, remains almost entirely undiscussed. A great deal of attention has been paid to the question of what the bosses depict, and when they were carved. But almost none has been paid to the question of how they depict it, nor how this relates to aesthetic traditions locally, nationally or internationally, nor how they were carved, nor how they were engaged with by their viewers. This thesis aims to fill these gaps.

_Historiography of British sculpture in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries_

Williband Sauerländer claimed in 1995 that ‘English Gothic sculpture is one of the neglected fields of art history’. His assessment, echoed since by a number of other scholars, still holds some sway. There has been no dedicated study of British medieval sculpture since Laurence Stone’s 1955 survey (revised 1972). Marginally more even-handed than Edward Prior and Arthur Gardner’s 1912 survey, Stone’s account was still ultimately modernist in its taste and is in need of revision. Less extensive surveys of the corpus have been made by Philip Lindley and others, often focussing on particular case studies. The list of monuments that Lindley, writing in 1995, deemed as having been given adequate scholarly attention was short (the Beverley Reredos, Lincolnshire’s

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18 The bosses are not mentioned by Lawrence Stone; a remarkable omission. E. W. Tristram, however, noted the quality of the later work: ‘In general character, style, and technique, the sculpture of the bosses in this walk differs considerably from the bosses in the eastern walk. Richer and more minute in execution, with a far greater store of incident, they present an extraordinary wealth of imagery’: see Cranage and Tristram 1938, 5.


22 Williamson 1987; Lindley 1995; also the introduction and collected essays in Thompson 1983.
Easter Sepulchres, Exeter’s west front, *inter alia*). Publications since his review can augment this list somewhat, but many monuments still demand focused research. Richard Marks’ 2003 catalogue to *Gothic: Art for England* did much to draw attention to the importance of this ‘elusive and complex’ period, and cleared space for the renewal of interest in this corpus of which this thesis is a part.

It is often noted that large-scale sculptural imagery was not commonly produced in England after the late thirteenth century. This is true enough, but redirecting attention toward small-scale imagery ought to open new avenues of research: any notion of genre-hierarchy that privileges certain types of sculpture above others must be questioned as to its historicity. The explosion of demand for figural work under the Decorated style created huge opportunities for specialised ‘imagers’, some of whom were certainly held in high esteem. Extensive figural programmes, such as the sculptural decorations in Ely’s Lady Chapel (comprising bosses, extravagant narrative reliefs, and free-standing

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23 Lindley 1995, 16.
24 Since 1995, for example: the Angel Choir at Lincoln has been interpreted by Paul Binski: Binski 2004, 268–82; the west fronts of Bath and Wells have been re-examined: Luxford 2000; Sampson 1998; Nicholas Dawton has revisited Beverley Minster: see his essays in Horrox 2000; Richard Marks has discussed Kentish material: Marks 2001. Some new research is being undertaken: the Jesse reredos from St Cuthbert’s, Wells, for example, has long begged proper analysis, and a cataloguing project is now underway. For this project see https://reredosproject.wordpress.com. Much remains to be done: George Zarnecki drew attention to the important collections of sculpture in the museums of York, Salisbury, Reading, Winchester, and Hereford, and fragments stored in triforia at York Minster and Peterborough Cathedral also warrant further research: see Thompson 1983, 218.
25 Marks, Williamson, and Townsend 2003, 14. For production and process see pp.86-97; for a useful historiographical essay pp.128-139.
26 For instance Lindley 1995, 80.
27 Lindley 1995, 15.
sculpture), and the extensive boss cycle at Norwich, have not received adequate study since their initial examination by Edwardian antiquarians, and still raise many unanswered questions.28

The art-historical neglect of fifteenth-century sculpture particularly is attributable to a number of historiographical issues above and beyond the significant losses of artefacts at the hands of iconoclasts.29 First, there has been, as mentioned above, a preponderance of ‘antiquarian’-style inquiry: such publication has focused on isolated topics (brasses, bosses, alabasters, misericords, tombs), without significant comparative study enabling discussion of style and the transmission of ideas.30 Rarely has any attempt been made at cross-media comment on sculptural style, for example, or on working practices.31

Secondly, there has been a tendency to esteem continental work during the later medieval period, and to see English productions as peripheral, derivative, inferior, or irrelevant. Paris (in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries) and Florence (in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries) have often been seen as central, even when it is acknowledged that English sculptors did create ‘curious and very distinctive hybrids’ which are poorly understood when assimilated into Parisian or Italo-centric

29 Lindley estimates that, with the combined effects of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century iconoclasm and unsympathetic restoration, 90% of what might have once existed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries has perished: Lindley 1995, 77; Stone 1955, 2.
30 Such studies as Cave 1948; Grössinger 1996a; Cheetham 2003.
31 Exceptions are, inter alia, Binski 2014a, 121-168 and passim.; Sauerländer 1999, which is really a statement of the problem; Lindley 1995. On sculptors’ working practices, see Lindley 1995, 17–22; Dawton 1983, 122–51; Sekules 1983, 151–65 - all discussed in Chapter 4.
paradigms. When compared to continental work of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, English sculpture of the same period has been characterised as exhibiting a ‘hardness of form and harshness of expression’, maintaining an emphasis on surface pattern and rhythmic expression, recalling Hiberno-Saxon art of the earlier middle ages: less ‘polished and refined’ than Parisian productions, but equally lacking the ‘pathos of Bamberg and Naumburg’.

Thirdly, because of a privileging of ‘Renaissance’ aesthetics (invoked by terms such as ‘clarity’, ‘calm’, ‘orderliness’), the general trend among twentieth-century scholars was to see the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in England (and in Europe generally) as a period of decline into aesthetic decadence and naivety. This governing narrative, of the ‘waning’ of the Middle Ages, can be traced back at least as far as Pugin and especially to Ruskin, and has only recently begun to be thoroughly challenged. According to Prior and Gardner, for example, fourteenth century masons began to delight in architecture ‘not as structure but as ornament: elaborating canopies and tabernacles; curving and spreading them over the facts of construction’ (my emphasis). With ‘prodigality’, the fourteenth century sculptor discarded the hard-won virtues of ‘simplicity and reserve’, replacing them with ‘contortion and exaggeration of gesture’ just as contemporary architects played with ‘variety and romantic colour’. Important examples of Northern figural sculpture were derided as products of a ‘disordered imagination’.

32 Sauerländer 1999, 2:457. For another statement of the pitfalls of Italocentric thinking see Binski 1995, 162.
34 On Pugin’s condemnation of fifteenth-century floridity and corruption, in Contrasts and The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture, see Buchanan 2003, 132. For contemporary rejections of this narrative see, among others, Murray 1987, 112; Kavaler 2012.
35 Gardner and Prior 1912, 2. This is echoed in Lawrence Stone’s later description of the Norwich Prior’s Door, for example, which he describes as exhibiting ‘contempt for architectural lines […] and sculpture used as irrelevant applique ornament.’ Stone 1955, 158.
36 Gardner and Prior 1912, 2.
37 Gardner and Prior 1912, 373.
The fourteenth-century artists of stone-building [...] possessed a technique no less expert [than their forebears]: but they used it in redundant and luxurious expressions that grew gradually indifferent to the essential calm that had belonged to the preceding sculpture. The craftsmanship of the Gothic mason became, as we read his story, a snare to him.  

And if the fourteenth century was bad, the fifteenth century was worse: ‘sculpture of the fifteenth century need not detain us long’, wrote Gardner; ‘It follows the traditions of the fourteenth, but with a tendency to deteriorate [...]’.  

The tendency for fifteenth-century sculpture to fall foul of governing art-historical narratives has also been observed in scholarship on Netherlandish and German sculpture of the same period. German literature, for example, labels the period between 1420 and 1470 in sculptural production as ‘die Dunkle Zeit’ [the dark time], because this period is less studied and because the sculpture was in a transitional phase, hard to define and characterised by formal experimentation; it moved away from French-inspired ‘international style’ but by 1470 had produced some standard forms, replicable in a rationalised production process. If a similar thing occurred in England between c.1420 and c.1470 we would expect to find a period of inventive sculptural practice with different avenues and idioms being pursued. This thesis investigates the development of one such ‘idiom’ in England between roughly these dates. In doing so it responds to Christopher Harper-Bill’s call for more investigations of regional stylistic ‘distinctiveness’.  

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38 Gardner and Prior 1912, 2.  
41 Fransen 2013, 9.  
Historiography of sculptural/spatial style

A further historiographical problem is that, across the study of sculpture, there is no well-developed scholarly discourse on questions of ‘sculptural idiom’. By ‘sculptural idiom’ I mean the specifically spatial way in which forms are rendered: the spatial decisions taken in the course of making an object which determine its final form; the space it occupies and implies; and the spatial relationship between the sculpture and the viewer.

Stylistic analysis of medieval sculpture is all too often restricted to analysis of certain details: fashions of depicted clothing or architecture; ways of rendering hair or faces; types of foliage. The analysis of these distinctive (but essentially graphic) devices is favoured because if offers a reliable means of dating sculpture and identifying ‘hands’ common between different sites. But attention is rarely given to other fundamental concerns: the question of formal disposition, of projection and virtuality, the use of space, line, protrusion, recession, light, shade, curvature. These are fundamentally formalistic concerns, and have perhaps been side-lined because they cannot be reduced to such simple taxonomies as can be used to distinguish between, for example, ‘stiff-leaf’ and ‘naturalistic’ foliage. Only rarely do we find discussion of such attributes in literature on English sculpture. Particularly relevant to this thesis is this brief comment made by Frank Woodman of the Norwich Cathedral nave bosses:

‘the flowing, delicate manner which dominated imagery from the late thirteenth century to the late fourteenth lends itself to the presentation of scenes on a miniature scale, while the bulky and dramatic manner of the fifteenth century, deriving from Burgundy and Flanders, is at best a monumental one, producing, in restricted groups and on the relatively small and distant field provided by the boss of a high vault, rather stolid and easily legible figures.’

Such comments are few and far between, and I draw attention to other examples where relevant in the course of this thesis.

The study of such spatial issues in sculpture has only a few key texts. Burckhardt, Schapiro, and Focillon all studied such questions in their formalistic analyses of Romanesque sculpture.\(^44\) Krautheimer analysed the perspective of Ghiberti’s great reliefs, but treated them rather as if they were paintings.\(^45\) John White and Robert Munman both discussed the ‘perspective’ of Donatello’s reliefs.\(^46\) Jules Lubbock noted the paucity of existing theory for the analysis of unusual objects, and made suggestions for some new paradigms based on oblique vision.\(^47\) Only relatively recently, in David Summers’ \textit{Real Spaces}, Christopher Lakey’s \textit{Sculptural Seeing}, and the work of Marvin Trachtenberg, has serious theoretical attention begun to be given to the problem of spatial representation in sculpture.\(^48\) This is a philosophically complex problem, requiring a complete un-doing of normative accounts of linear perspectival representation, and it has rarely been considered in any depth.\(^49\) In Chapter 7 of this thesis I hope to contribute to this emerging discussion by connecting my analysis of the Norwich bosses with the wider stakes of questions around sculpture and space.

\(^{44}\) Schapiro 2006; 1993a; Focillon 1989, 78–79, 110.
\(^{45}\) Krautheimer 1982, 221–53.
\(^{46}\) White 1987, 192–96; Munman 1985a.
\(^{47}\) Lubbock 2006, 86–91.
\(^{48}\) Summers 2003, 43-52 and passim; Lakey 2018a; Trachtenberg 2019.
\(^{49}\) A useful account of Baroque spatial effects and mobile viewing, however, can be found in J.J. van Gastel’s doctoral thesis: Gastel 2011.
i.2 Methodological issues

Photography and sculpture

‘As soon as a single rooted viewpoint takes precedence, the living work becomes a mere canvas and the beautiful rounded form is dismembered into a pitiful polygon. For this reason [the viewer] shifts from place to place: his eye becomes his hand and the ray of light his finger.’

The Norwich cloister bosses have tended to be represented in publication with single photographs, usually taken from directly below. Visiting the site, however, one quickly becomes aware that in order to comprehend their complex forms and read the scenes represented it is necessary to move around. A key methodological concern for my research has therefore been to find ways of documenting and reproducing the bosses which are more faithful to their complex forms, and to estimate the relationship between conventional photography and the historiographic neglect that the sculptures have suffered to date.

The static image of sculpture offered by photography has influenced the art-historical study of sculptural aesthetics, leading some sculptural idioms to be preferred above others. Wölfflin argued that any ‘good’ sculpture should have one (or at most two) dominant angle(s) from which it ought to be viewed. His contemporary Adolf von Hildebrand took this ‘planocentricism’ further, demanding that sculptors produce plane-orientated sculpture to prevent the viewer from being restlessly ‘driven all around’.

Such qualitative judgements are no longer fashionable but the value systems they evince

50 Herder 2002, 40.
51 See for example the photographs used in Sekules 2006.
52 A similar process can been observed in the study of painting: ‘Doctors of the Church’ vault frescos in the Upper Church at Assisi employ unconventional perspective on a parabolic surface, but are virtually relegated from the canon because of their incompatibility with photography: see White 1987, 31.
53 Wölfflin 2013.
54 Hildebrand and Meyer 1907, 95.
have arguably endured: this extreme and prescriptive privileging of the plane, encouraged by the hegemony of the photograph, has perhaps compromised our understanding of pre-modern sculpture, fuelling a pervasive sort of ‘pictorialism’. Some sculptures – including the Norwich bosses - demand that we are ‘driven all around’; are they therefore of lower quality?

The tendency of conventional photography to mislead sculptural analysis has been discussed in the recent work of a number of scholars. Geraldine Johnson has shown that it has long been recognised that the photographs chosen to represent sculpture for publication affect the reader’s (and the author’s) impression of the work. Jules Lubbock sought to challenge the dominance of single ‘authoritative’ photographs in his seminal discussion of Pisano’s pulpit reliefs, suggesting instead that the sculpture anticipated and demanded viewing from a number of oblique viewpoints. Jackie Jung made similar suggestions in her recent study of Sluter’s Well of Moses. Employing a method first developed by Rasmussen, and since used by Baxandall and Alpers, Jung and others have offered sequences of photographs to try to represent the manifold viewing angles that these sculptures anticipate. These photo sequences, however, do not entirely disrupt the hegemony of the camera and the associated paradigm of static, disembodied beholding: in presenting multiple viewpoints of sculptural objects, Jung and others challenge the Wölfflin/Hildebrand stress on a single plane, but risk creating an understanding of sculpture as a succession of planes, inadvertently reinforcing the pictorialism they intend to disrupt. There remains a gulf between the qualia of a beholder greeting the object in the flesh and the qualia of a viewer observing a static plate or plates in a published account. Video might be seen as a solution to some of these problems, but amongst other impoverishments it deprives the viewer of all agency.

55 Johnson 2013, 12.
56 Lubbock 2006, 85–140, and passim.
57 Jung 2013.
in choosing where and when to shift their angle of inspection. Embodied experience remains fundamentally irreducible.

Even the earliest pioneers of photography sought methods that might counter the limitations of the photographic plate, but until recently such techniques were complex, expensive and impractical. Even the earliest pioneers of photography sought methods that might counter the limitations of the photographic plate, but until recently such techniques were complex, expensive and impractical. Photogrammetric modelling, however, now offers scholars a way of producing virtual 3D models of artefacts quickly and cheaply. Photographs of a boss are gathered on site from as many angles as possible (a minimum of c.50 is sufficient; the photographs do not have to be from precise angles). Modelling software is then used to extrapolate the likely contours of the sculpture from the photographs, building a wire-frame model and then mapping the photographs back onto this shell, creating a virtual model which can be manipulated and considered from different angles. These models can be shared online and cited in publications; they permit the viewer to manipulate the model to experiment with different points of view. Crucially, they allow viewers to change their viewing angle and distance freely, offering a moving image rather than a succession of fixed images, and, unlike when viewing video, the viewer retains complete control of their position. It is also possible to remove potentially misleading modern polychromy, and to make side-by-side comparisons between sculptures which are geographically distant. There are of course still many elements of viewing ‘in the flesh’ that the photogrammetric model does not replicate, but it nevertheless offers a distinct improvement on earlier technologies.

This is not the first time that technological innovations have facilitated a change in the way bosses are studied. C. J. P. Cave was conscious of the enabling role that technological developments had played in the compilation of his catalogue. Where his predecessors had struggled to capture satisfactory images of the dark and distant sculptures, Cave had at his disposal a telephoto lens and a powerful spotlight, permitting

59 A good summary of the early experiments is Schröter 2014.
60 See Jeffs 2017; Hawkins 2017.
61 Cave 1948, 2.
the collation of a comprehensive survey. But whereas Cave could hope only to make a legible plate of each sculpture, forming the basis of a discussion of iconography, the photogrammetric model now permits the study of three-dimensional effects and ‘sculptural idiom’. Digital models of the bosses allow me to communicate the complexity of their spatial devices to a reader, to pass on the experience of roving around them, slowly appreciating their complex forms.

A full list of the models produced during my research can be found in the front matter of this thesis; reference to individual models is made in the text using roman numerals (eg. [Model IV]).

*Keeping faith with the object*

This thesis borrows some of its approach from the field of ‘reception aesthetics’ as defined by Wolfgang Kemp. That is to say, it is on the lookout for ‘the implicit beholder’, for the function of the beholder prescribed in the work of art.\(^6^2\) This amounts to a determination to ‘keep faith’ with the object itself, letting its formal properties suggest certain lines of enquiry and certain assumptions about intended modes of viewing, rather than being restricted to the lines of enquiry permitted by the available documentary sources, as previous studies of the bosses have tended to be.

My intention is not to offer an a-historical account the bosses’ aesthetics, but rather to use the objects themselves as a primary source in speculating on the dynamics of their historical beholding. I intend to ‘cast around’ for historical material supporting certain readings of their formal properties, but to be directed in this process by assumptions based on formal and phenomenological observations of the bosses themselves.\(^6^3\) Viewing the bosses on site, for example, one becomes very aware of the continual straining of the neck required to crane backwards and inspect them; the neck quickly

\(^{62}\) W. Kemp and Cheetham 1998, 183.

\(^{63}\) I borrow my notion of ‘casting around’ from Baxandall 1982, 145.
tires and one has to rest. Such an observation can be demonstrated to have more historical validity by the tracing of a pre-modern source: Paulinus of Nola, in his poem Carmen 27 of 403CE, notes that to see the pictures on porticoes a viewer must ‘somewhat labour by bending back your neck, to scan all of them with a reclined gaze’. But even when such sources are temporally distant from the object of inquiry (as here), or when sources do not exist, we ought not to be prevented from making such phenomenological observations and speculating on their historicity. I am therefore seeking a union of the historicist and presentist stances like that proposed by John Shearman in his seminal text Only Connect.

There is good precedent for such an approach in the work of Michael Baxandall, specifically his Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany. Baxandall lets the form of the sculptures in question suggest certain paradigms of intended viewing, regardless of the availability of evidence for historical reception. This is instructive for my investigation, both in terms of methodology and because the paradigm he is suggesting is extremely pertinent to the Norwich boss sculptures:

‘Leinberger’s is very much a phenomenalist sort of art in that it forces us to see it as consisting in an intricate act of serial perception by ourselves rather than in a wooden artefact, a process and not a thing: to stretch a phrase, a Leinberger sculpture is a permanent possibility of cumulative sensation’. It … ‘urges one to move physically about it in an energetic kind of perception involving the whole body, for it has no proper point of view. To some extent this must be true of most good sculpture, but in practice many fine pieces have ‘typical’ angles, optimum distances, specially productive points of view: Leinberger’s do not, and one wonders about the medium in which he conceived his designs and made studies’.

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Few other accounts of sculptural viewing offer descriptions so relevant to the mobile viewing required by the bosses.\textsuperscript{68} Paul Binski, however, briefly suggested such factors to be relevant to the reception of the fourteenth-century bosses, stating that ‘the movement, close looking and polyfocal ponderation required by their relation are agents of wondering in themselves’.\textsuperscript{69} This thesis examines these factors in much greater depth and focusses on the fifteenth-century bosses in order to do so.

\textbf{i.3 Thesis summary}

My thesis has three parts and comprises seven chapters: Part 1 is concerned with archaeology and chronology; Part 2 is concerned with questions of making; Part 3 is concerned with issues of interpretation. This structure intends to offer a kind of ‘zooming out’, whereby the historical facts of my principal case study are established before more speculative questions begin to be asked about facture and reception.

\textit{Part 1}

The first part of the thesis aims to get the chronology established and to situate the later Norwich cloister bosses within a longer history of curvaceous boss sculpture. In Chapter 1 I offer a ‘pre-history’, a survey of boss sculpture in England before 1400. I begin with some of the first decorated bosses and trace the flourishing tradition through the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This chapter necessarily includes the first phases of the Gothic cloister work at Norwich, vaulted between 1297 and 1330. I closely examine the relationship between these earliest bosses and the kinds of manuscript that might have been used as their model. In Chapter 2 I clarify the chronology and iconography of the fifteenth-century vaulting campaigns in the Norwich cloister, before

\textsuperscript{68} For one other example see Scholten 2017, 448, describing the ingenious stacking and interweaving of boxwood scenes ‘makes the reading of this work of art a true adventure, with viewers having to take the trouble to discover the correct order of the scenes’.

\textsuperscript{69} Binski 2014a, 209.
‘parsing’ the different formal conceits which make this spatial grammar so distinctive. This extended passage of visual analysis (Chapter 2.2) forms the centre of the first part of this thesis: it makes the case for the distinctiveness of the idiom, on which the rest of the thesis builds. Chapter 3 then traces the subsequent spread of this idiom through Norfolk and East Anglia following the completion of the Norwich cloister. I identify a cohesive group of vaulted ceilings in East Anglia whose distortive bosses employ this same idiomatic sculptural language. I also discuss the well-known bosses of the cathedral nave, transepts, and Bauchun chapel, all vaulted in the latter half of the fifteenth century, building up a picture of a flourishing local tradition.

Part 2

Part 2 is concerned with questions of facture. In Chapter 4 I examine the role of the itinerant ‘gravours’ who carved the bosses. I speculate on their likely competencies and working methods, using sources and documents from other comparable building sites, and I consider the relationship between their likely working methods and the form of their finished products. In Chapter 5 I zoom out further, looking for comparable artefacts and instances of similar sculptural idiom beyond the field of boss sculpture: I examine misericords, Netherlandish architectural sculpture, and boxwood prayer nuts, drawing attention to issues of making in each case. This does not intend to be a comprehensive survey of appearances of this sculptural idiom; instead it is a series of case studies which show the idiom not to be confined to boss sculpture.

Part 3

Part 3 is concerned with questions of reception and interpretation. What are we to make of this distinctive idiom? How can we get beyond merely asserting that it is formally interesting, or tracing its genealogy? I offer two chapters which take different approaches to the problem. Chapter 6 begins the Baxandallian process of ‘casting around’, looking for contemporary terms and concepts which might get closer to an
A historicist reading of this idiom. I draw on rhetorical terms and concepts as well as a number of terms found in contemporary contracts. Chapter 7 takes a more diachronic and theoretical approach, and considers the implications of my reading of this distinctive idiom for art-historical narratives and concepts of perspective, representation, embodied beholding, and mobile viewing. I take issue with recent work on this topic by scholars such as Christopher Lakey which has not done enough to overturn teleological narratives and too often sees medieval spatial representation and perspectival science as merely laying the groundwork for Renaissance ‘breakthroughs’. Instead, I look at some loosely contemporary theologians writing on perspective and draw analogies between their epistemological stances and the sculptural/spatial style of the bosses. I make these comparisons and analogies only tentatively, but I am more forthright about the need to destabilise the hegemony of the linear-perspectival paradigm.

A note on illustrations and references

Throughout the thesis I refer to the Norwich cloister bosses using a numbering system denoting the walk, bay, and individual number of each boss (eg. ‘NB4’ refers to boss ‘4’ in bay ‘B’ of the north walk, ‘N’). This system corresponds to the maps published at the beginning of my illustrations [Figs.I,II] and to the catalogue of boss thumbnail images included thereafter in the bay-by-bay plans of the cloister [Figs.1-50]. Where larger images of certain bosses are required to illustrate my argument I include them in the body of my illustrations, and reference them in the text using figure numbers (eg. [Fig.98]).

As stated above, a full list of the photogrammetric models produced during my research can be found in the front matter of this thesis; reference to individual models is made in the text using roman numerals (eg. [Model IV]).
Part 1: Archaeology & chronology

Chapter 1 — Figural bosses before 1411

In order to be able to appreciate the distinctive stylistic idiom of the 1411-1430 bosses, we must be able to explain the tradition of boss sculpture which the Norwich sculptors were building upon. This chapter sets out a ‘prehistory’, of figural boss sculpture before 1411. It pays particular attention to instances where the idiom of the later bosses is prefigured: instances of curvature, of figural compositions swelling outwards, and of forms compressed within a hemispherical frame. This ‘prehistory’ is complicated by the fact that it necessarily includes the 1300-1330 work at Norwich, as well as examples from other regions: stylistic development at the local and the national level are intertwined. For the sake of clarity, this ‘prehistory’ is therefore organised into distinct sections.

First, I sketch the development of boss sculpture nationally before 1300. I bring together examples which might have served as precedents for the 1300-1330 work at Norwich. I am indebted to C. J. P. Cave’s survey of this material, which remains the most comprehensive overview of English boss sculpture. I build on Cave’s narrative by paying greater attention to sculptural/spatial effects.

Secondly, I look in detail at the early boss campaigns at Norwich (1297-1330), clarifying the chronology of the building campaigns, the choice of scenes depicted in the bosses, and describing the different sculptural approaches employed. Particular attention is again paid to the ways in which these early bosses prepare the way for the sculptural vocabulary of the later carvers. My analysis of the order of construction at Norwich exceeds the level of detail with which I have been able to address other sites; this is necessary in order to clarify the chronology and to distinguish the 1411-1430 idiom from the (related) earlier work.
I then go on to sketch the development of boss sculpture in England through the rest of the fourteenth century, again highlighting instances where similar spatial devices are employed to those developed later in Norwich. I comment first on the relationship between early Norwich bosses and projects being managed concurrently by the Ramsey company, before broadening out to consider national trends. Again, I pay particular attention to instances where we see prefigured the effects which the later Norwich masons would go on to achieve in their 1411-1430 campaigns.

1.1 Boss sculpture before 1300

The custom of decoratively carving a vault’s keystone was a Norman invention. Only with the advent of Gothic architecture, however, did bosses begin to be sites of significant sculptural elaboration. In the choir at Canterbury there are rich bosses of deeply cut conventionalised foliage, and also some interesting figural examples: the Agnus Dei boss in the middle of the choir, for example, pre-1178, already has some of the features which would come to be so important - such as back-turning angels, who offer interest from oblique viewpoints, bending upwards into the interstitial spaces [Fig. 51]. These bosses are an entirely new genre, distinctively English - they are unlike contemporary French examples, which are flatter and wreath-like, and Cave therefore surmised that it was from Canterbury that the notion of boss sculpture spread through England in subsequent centuries.

Foliate bosses were more common than figural ones in the thirteenth century (as afterward). Notable examples of rich, conventionalised foliate bosses include those in St

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70 For Norman abstract and figural examples see Tickencote, Iffley, Kilpeck, or the treasury at Canterbury Cathedral: Cave 1948, 4.
71 See Cave 1948, 60.
72 Cave 1948, 4. For the French ones see Viollet-le-Duc 1854, 3:257ff.
Hugh’s Choir at Lincoln of the late twelfth century [Fig.52] and others at Westminster, Salisbury, Worcester, Wells, and Ely [Fig.53].

Figural work in this early period emerges from within this tradition of foliate bosses, with small figural elements appearing amidst foliage. Examples are found in the naves of Wells and Gloucester (c.1230 & c.1240), in the chapter house at Salisbury (1263); and in the aisles at Westminster Abbey (c.1270) [Fig.54]. Larger figures, surrounded by foliage, deeply cut into bower-like spaces within bosses, are in this tradition: they are to be found first in the choir and Lady Chapel at Worcester in 1218/1224 [Fig.55], then in the Ely presbytery (1234-52); in the Muniment room (c.1245-50) and aisles (c.1270) at Westminster [Fig.56]; at Lincoln, where finely cut foliate bosses in the choir vault (1256-80) give way in the aisles to exquisite bower-like enclosures enclosing saintly figures [Fig.57]; and in the Exeter retrochoir and presbytery bosses of the 1290s, which wrathe their figures in a collar of naturalistic foliage [Fig.58]. All these bosses are fine productions, with spectacularly undercut foliage; the examples from Lincoln represent the epitome of this ‘bower’ tradition.

In thirteenth-century buildings there is already some differentiation between the amount of detail in high and low bosses. In the Lincoln Angel Choir, and in the earlier parts of

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73 Cave 1948, 7–10 for discussion. More naturalistic foliage is found in the later nave bosses at Gloucester, Canterbury, and Exeter, and in the nave at St Mary Redcliffe.
74 Cave 1948, 10.
75 See Cave 1934, 75.
76 Cave 1948, 10 and pl.85-7.
77 Cave 1948, 10, and pls.226 and 230. Early bosses in the transept aisles at Westminster are bravura pieces of work, deeply cut with lots of oblique interest: for example, north transept bay III: Annunciation to a seated Mary, with angel with harp coming from the space between ribs. The format of this boss is copied later in the Westminster Chapter House. For the Muniment Room and its original function, see Wilson 2008, 64–69; Guerry and Binski 2015, 180–85; Binski calls the bosses “some of the finest ever carved”.
78 Cave 1948, 7–8; 1936 passim.
79 The extensive bibliography on Exeter’s sculpture is compiled in Henry and Hulbert, n.d.; key texts include Prideaux 1910; Cave 1953.
Westminster Abbey, the high bosses are foliate, while those in the aisles have figural detail.\textsuperscript{80} From the outset, then, sculptors had some awareness of economy of effort: time is better spent on an ornate boss if it is closer to its intended viewers.

Lincoln’s wooden-vaulted cloister, constructed c.1290-1300 under Bishop Oliver Sutton, features a set of fine wooden bosses of grotesques and animals (and a few religious subjects) and is perhaps the most important direct ancestor for the Norwich work.\textsuperscript{81} This was the first cloister in the country to feature a ‘programme’ of bosses: whilst there is no governing scheme, bosses are used throughout; they anticipate the Norwich east walk in their mixture of the foliate and the jongleuric, and many are spatially adventurous, assembling figures to create round compositions [Fig.59], bending architectural elements in order to imply a hemisphere [Fig.60], taking advantage of the fibrous wood to achieve deep undercutting and overhangs. Lincoln’s relative proximity to Norwich suggests it must have been known to the Norwich monks, who were beginning to consider reworking their own cloister just as Lincoln’s bosses were being pegged into place.

Thus we can say that, when work began at Norwich in 1297, there was already a growing tradition of figural boss sculpture emerging from within the tradition of foliate boss carving. The fight between the centaur and dragon from the Westminster Muniment room (c.1250)\textsuperscript{82} already has many of the hallmarks of the style which would shortly appear at Norwich: figures curve to fit the space of the boss; there is deep undercutting; the bevelled edges offer (albeit minimal) oblique interest. It remains, however, to clarify the stages of construction at Norwich in order to disentangle the various stylistic threads which are interwoven there.

\textsuperscript{80} Cave 1948, 4.
\textsuperscript{81} J. S. Alexander 2006; Brighton 1985; building on Cave 1936; for the Norwich connection, see Sekules 2006, 288; Binski 2014a, 104.
\textsuperscript{82} For the Muniment room bosses, see Gardner 1951, 113–16; Cave 1948, pl.230; Guerry and Binski 2015, 180–85.
1.2 The 1297-1330 Norwich cloister campaigns

This section draws together existing accounts of the cloisters’ building and attempts to assemble from them a cohesive account of the construction sequence and the iconography of the fourteenth century bosses.\(^{83}\)

The Gothic cloister at Norwich replaced an earlier Romanesque structure, from which some decorative capitals and other architectural fragments survive.\(^{84}\) It is likely that fire damage caused by the 1272 riots provided the impetus for the new construction, but it is not clear to what extent the Romanesque structure was damaged. When searching for a general outline of the order in which the new cloister was built, scholars have tended to refer to the account of the construction found in the cathedral’s *Registrum Primum*, penned some time between 1430 and 1558.\(^{85}\) This sets out the sequence of events: work was begun in the east walk at the entrance to the Chapter House in 1297 (EH), and this east walk, along with a portion of the south walk (*‘to the bays in which the towels hang’* - SJ) was completed under the patronage of John Salmon. It goes on to describe the patrons and campaigns of the later fifteenth-century work (this will be addressed in Chapter 2). As a textual record of the construction, the *Registrum Primum* is predated only by the communar, pitancer and camera rolls that formed the basis of Fernie and Whittingham’s study, and, as Fernie and Whittingham found, the sources are largely mutually corroborating. This is the relevant section of the *Registrum Primum*, in Harvey’s translation:

\[^{83}\text{The existing accounts are: Fernie and Whittingham 1972; A. Whittingham 1981; Fernie 1993, 163–86; Woodman 1996; Rose 1996; I. Atherton, Fernie, and Harper-Bill 1996b; Rose 1999; Sekules 2006; Binski 2014a, 101–14.}\]

\[^{84}\text{Franklin 1996.}\]

\[^{85}\text{This text was copied into the *Itineraries of William of Worcester* by Robert Talbot, prebendary at Norwich from 1547; for transcriptions & translations see J. H. Harvey 1969, xix-xx and 396-7; Fernie 1993, 166–67; Salzman 1997, 388–89.}\]
‘In the year 1297 the work of the cloister was begun at the entrance to the Chapter House with the Chapter House itself, by Lord Ralph Walpole, then Bishop of Norwich, as is made plain by writing on a stone placed on the West side of the cloister in front of the entrance to the chapter house which is as follows: ‘Lord Ralph Walpole bishop of Norwich, laid me’, and also by Richard Uppeball founder of the aforesaid work, as is made plain by writing carved on a stone place on the eastern side of the said cloister which is on the North side of the chapter house entrance already mentioned which is as follows: ‘Richard Uppehall, the beginner of this work, laid me’. And three bays [cyverys] were made by the same men in addition to the chapter house. The remaining five towards the church with the entrance to the church and towards the entrance which goes to the infirmary and from that entrance to the bays in which the towels hang were made at the expense of Lord John Ely bishop of Norwich and other friends, and also through the office of pitancer specially deputed by the convent for this purpose.’

Below I work through this account chronologically, dealing with each section of the construction in turn and commenting on the dating, iconographical programme, and sculptural idiom in each case.

*East walk*

There is no other evidence to corroborate the date of 1297 for the beginning of the cloister works, but there is no reason to doubt the Registrum Primum. It has generally been assumed that the chapter house, built by Richard Ramsey, was complete by 1291.86 The first corroborating documentary reference to the cloister is a payment of £5 for the ‘fabric of the cloister’ [Latin?] by the Cellarer’s office in 1299.87

The three ‘cyverys’ referred to in front of the Chapter House are probably three bays of the garth-side wall and their substantial buttresses (Bays G,H,I). A 1785 painting of the cloister shows these three buttresses of the garth wall to have weathered differently

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86 This is assumed by Woodman 1996, 163. On the attribution to Richard ‘Ramsey’ see Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 30.
87 Camera Roll 15, in Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 32.
from those surrounding, being of a tougher (Barnack) stone than those around them.\textsuperscript{88} The springers for the vault, and the sculpted garth-side ‘keystones’, which in these three bays they are foliate – EGG, EHG, EIG), are both bonded into the wall - so we might assume that, at this foundational stage, a tierceron vault with foliate bosses was envisaged, in the foliate tradition of Worcester, Westminster and Ely. The window tracery of these bays is not structurally integrated and so could have been inserted at any point in the ongoing campaign (their similarity to forms in the lower chapel of St Stephens Westminster corroborates a date soon after 1297); the same is true for the distinctive three bays of ogival tracery in Chapter House vestibule wall (developmentally slightly ‘later’ than their garth-side equivalents).

\begin{quote}
'The remaining five towards the church with the entrance to the church, and towards the entrance which goes to the infirmary ….'
\end{quote}

The sequence of construction for the rest of the east walk can be deduced by comparing sculptural style, moulding profiles and springer styles. It seems likely that the next phase of construction was the garth wall of Bays J,K,L,M. These bays have vault springers of a rather different angle to G,H,I; they are ‘pushed back’ more towards the wall [let this be called ‘springer style 2’].\textsuperscript{89} The garth-side keystone bosses of J,K,L are foliate, matching those of G,H,I. Bay M, however, has a figural ‘grotesque’ for its keystone (EM4): this figure has a good claim to being the first flickering of ‘jongleuriac’ character in the cloister.

It seems likely that the vaulting of bays G,H,I,J,K,L,M was undertaken around this point in the sequence, because the bosses are entirely foliate, matching the garth wall keystones. The exception to this is Bay M, which has a number of grotesques in its vault

\textsuperscript{88} Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 31. The painting, by William Wilkins, was still residing the cathedral vestry in 1972. The same difference in stone is evident in the nineteenth-century photograph reproduced in Fernie 1993, 164.

\textsuperscript{89} Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 32; Woodman 1996, 166–67 and 174–78. This difference in ‘springer styles’ was first observed by Robert Willis: see Stewart 1875.
(EM0, EM7), including a fine ‘green man’ as its central boss (EM4). These figural elements are either first dabblings with the style which would ‘bloom’ in the northern bays of the east walk (A-E), or else are slightly later work, an attempt to work in some jongleuric features whilst matching the generally foliate work of the G,H,I,J,K,L vaults. It cannot be certain which, but the former seems more likely.

Bays F,E,D,C,B of the garth wall seem to have gone up next. Their window openings share the moulding profile of all the earlier work (bays G-M). But their springers are different again [let this be ‘springer style 3’], and, most importantly, their garth-side keystones (apart from bay F, which is foliate) are lavishly figural. The scenes are of a genre nature; there are musicians (ECG), a man and a washerwoman fighting over clothes (EDG), a man fighting a lion (EEG), and fighters on horseback (EBG). The sculptural style is distinctive (a good match for the figural sculpture of SM4). At this point, then, it seems there was a decision to divert from the original foliate style in order to pursue a more jocular mode. It seems there was still no biblical scheme planned at this point.

Following the completion of the garth wall along the east walk, two more bays of garth wall were built, perhaps with the aim of buttressing the lateral spread of the end bays (EA and EN) so that they could be vaulted. First was south walk bay A, which has a new moulding profile over its window arch [‘moulding profile 2’] and a figural keystone (SAG) in the same jongleuric idiom as bays EE,ED,EC,EB (showing a man fighting a lion-headed grotesque). Following this there came north bay A, which has yet another new moulding profile over its garth window arch [‘moulding profile 3’] and a figural keystone in the same idiom as bays EE,ED,EC,EB and south A (two men fight, one mounted on a ram, one on a lion). This profile, ‘moulding profile 3’, was adopted for all other window arches of the garth wall around the cloister. The garth wall of north A has its tracery bonded integrally, so it can be assumed that by this point a tracery design had been decided upon for the east walk.
It is a reasonable assumption that the vaulting of east bays E,D,C,B,A then took place. Bay F has some figural (but not biblical) bosses (EF3, EF2, EF5); its vaulting is best grouped with that of bays G,H,I,J,K,L,M (its idiom – half foliate, half grotesque - is very similar to bay M). Following the vaulting of EF, it seems the decision was at last taken to incorporate some biblical elements. The keystones of the inner wall arches in bays E-B (EE0, ED0, EC0, EB0) feature the Four Evangelists with their respective symbols. These keystones, structurally speaking, must have gone in marginally before the rest of the vault, and must therefore have been the first biblical element of the cloister programme. The central bosses (boss 4 in each bay) of east bays E,D,C,B,A all show scenes from the Passion (this might explain why the Registrum Primum refers to ‘the remaining five’ between the Chapter House cyvers and the church: in fact there are six bays between the Chapter House bay A and the Prior’s Door, if we include bay F - but F was vaulted separately). Bay N at the south/east corner was probably vaulted around this time too; it has an angel amongst foliage as its central boss, and is a good match for the style of the Passion bosses.90

These northern bays are sculpturally very impressive, already showing a remarkable ability to twist forms to create spheres. Philip Lindley connects the back-turned nude man in one of these subsidiaries (EA6) to the nude figures of the Ormsby Psalter (MS Douce 366, Bodleian Library, Oxford), a manuscript intimately connected with Norwich and in which the influence of Italian painting is discerned; hecommends this boss as the first example of such Italian influence in English sculpture.91 It must be stressed, however, that the most distinctive conceits of these bosses are not graphic but sculptural and spatial: the way that a fox, a dog and a fowl (EB5) are pushed together to make a ball, or the way that the Resurrection becomes nearly spherical (EB4). Such witty manoeuvres anticipate the later conceits described in Chapter 2.

90 Nigel Morgan, in an unpublished paper, reads this boss (EN4) as the first scene of the Apocalypse cycle which follows it in the south walk; I read it rather as part of the east walk.
91 Lindley 1987, n.53.
Paul Binski has linked the shift away from the more austere foliate style of the southern bays toward the richer style of the northern bays (E-A), with their combination of jongleuric and biblical ornament, to the arrival of Bishop John Salmon.\(^{92}\) We can be reasonably certain that these works were undertaken during Salmon’s years of tenure (1299-1325), but the extent to which the change in style can be thought of as a sudden consequence of a ‘change at the top’ is uncertain, given the necessary sequence of construction described, and the incremental shift (from foliate, to figural-grotesque, to biblical) in style which this sequence implies.

It seems that the Prior’s Door was constructed around the same time as the vaulting of east bays E-A, since its central finial is carved into a section of the vault rib. Looking carefully at the jointing, it does seem impossible that the door was a marginally later installation (there are a number of sections of vault rib cobbled together [Fig.61]). But the door’s sculptural style is very much consistent with the boss work in east bays A,B,C,D,E. There seems to be a common hand at work in many of these figures; the sculptor seems to emphasize upper lips and particularly the ‘philtrum’ or cleft in the lip (EA7, EBG, EC6, EDG, ED6, EF5), so we might call this sculptor the ‘philtrum master’.

Dates suggested by other scholars for this work on the east walk and Prior’s Door have varied. Fernie and Whittingham originally suggested 1330 for the Prior’s Door and 1297-c.1325 for the walk itself.\(^{93}\) Fernie then revised his position in his 1993 text, suggesting 1314 as a likely completion date for the east walk and Prior’s Door.\(^{94}\) Woodman put the vaulting of the bays at 1325-9 and the portal at 1330.\(^{95}\) Sekules

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\(^{92}\) Binski 2014a, 102–14.
\(^{93}\) Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 31–33.
\(^{94}\) Fernie 1993, 173–75.
\(^{95}\) Woodman 1996, 166–68.
accords with Woodman, using 1330 as a likely completion date.96 Binski prefers a date of 1315-1325 for the Chapter House tracery, Prior’s Door and associated north-end vaulting, because the ogival forms they employ do not feature on the Ethelbert Gate, under construction c.1310-15.97 There is very little documentary evidence to shore up any of these dates beyond the occasional non-specific references to cloister expenditure in the communar and pitancer rolls, the transparency of which has been rather overstated by Fernie and Whittingham.98

The firmest date in any of the documentary sources comes from communar John de Worstead’s Apologia, a section of Roll 1042a, wherein John explains his own expenditure on the south walk during his periods of office 1320-22 and 1329-30, and compares it both to that of his colleagues working on the south walk (1313/14-20, 1322-29) and to the expenditure on the completed east walk.99 This source, dating from 1330, gives firm dates of 1313/14-1330 for the construction of ‘the ten bays next to the refectory’ (south bays A-K). It seems unlikely that the south walk would have been begun while significant works were underway on the east walk, and I see no reason why 1313-4 should not therefore be the terminus ante quem for the whole east walk.100 This gives us a bracket of 1297-1314 during which the east walk and Prior’s Door were completed.101

97 Binski 2014a, 373; 1315-55 [sic] is a typo.
98 References in rolls to the purchase of lengths of string course, quicklime, flint, sand, and marble columns cannot so easily be ascribed to this or that bay, and any attempt to do so leads to confusion: the potential for ‘carried error’ is enormous, and the ambiguity of different terms (eg. ‘oggyes’, ‘gobetz’ – none of which refer unambiguously to a certain type of material) is great.
99 Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 33.
100 Binski’s parallel between the alternating canopies of the Prior’s Door and a Psalter from Ramsey Abbey (Morgan MS. M.302, fol. 4v) still suits this 1313/14 date (since the MS is dated 1310-20): Binski 2014a, 110.
101 I am therefore in agreement with Fernie’s revised dates for these bays: see Fernie 1993, 164–70.
South bays A-J

‘... and from that entrance to the bays in which the towels hang were made at the expense of Lord John Ely bishop of Norwich and other friends, and also through the office of pitancer specially deputed by the convent for this purpose.’

Following the completion of the east walk in 1313/4, work on the south walk began immediately, with a transfer of responsibilities to the communar.\textsuperscript{102} Worstead’s Apologia describes the construction and vaulting of 10 bays before 1330 – these bays are SA – SJ.

As with the east walk, work would have had to have begun with the garth wall as a structural necessity. The window arches of all the openings of south, west and north walks (apart from south bay A, already discussed) share the same moulding profile (‘moulding profile 3’), first seen in north bay A. The exact sequence of events at this point is uncertain but it seems likely that a significant ‘mural campaign’ began around this date.\textsuperscript{103}

This ‘mural campaign’ was an attempt to construct the entire garth wall of the cloister. The garth-side keystone bosses (boss ‘G’ in each bay) in the south, west and north walks, bonded into the garth-side wall, bear no relation at all to the iconographical programme of the vaults anywhere in the cloister, suggesting a completely separate conception. Yet even considered as a group, these garth-side keystone bosses are something of a jumble, both stylistically and iconographically. There are a number of exact (or near-exact) duplicates: SBG (two lions and foliage) matches NIG (now damaged) very closely indeed; SKG and NDG (two dragons and foliage) are similar. Pairs of standing figures are found in NGG, NHG, NJG, SHG, SIG, WHG. There is a

\textsuperscript{102} Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 33, citing Roll 1042a.

\textsuperscript{103} Sekules was the first to make this suggestion of an holistic ‘mural campaign’: Sekules 2006, 289. I differ from her significantly in my dating of the vaulting but I believe her suggestion that the garth wall went up first is sensible.
cohesive group of foliate keystones in the west walk: WEG, WFG, WIG, NKG. Two keystones with male faces, with sprays of foliage issuing from their mouths (NCG, WCG), are compositionally similar but stylistically slightly different. The south walk keystone bosses are the best preserved and perhaps hang together best as a group: the garth-side keystones in south bays D,F,G,H,I are all of a comparable style to the figural work in the east walk main vault (compare SHG and SIG, both very fine, to the Prior’s Door). We might therefore suggest that work began with the south walk garth wall, with some bosses (SKG, SBG) perhaps cut alongside duplicates which were then installed somewhat later in the north walk (NDG, NIG). It seems the south garth wall and the eastern-end of the north garth wall both probably predate the west garth wall, where the more cohesive group of foliate stones is found (west E, F, I, and NK on the north/west corner).

It seems unlikely that an holistic Apocalypse cycle (of the sort we find in the west walk, bays D-L) was envisaged when these garth-side keystones were being cut, or else we might expect some degree of iconographical integration between the garth-side keystones and the main vaults overhead. This assumption is tentative – it may have been that an Apocalypse cycle was planned but that it was simply never the intention to include the garth-side stones in the scheme (though why they are such a mélange is still a puzzle). The somewhat iconographically ‘stranded’ garth-side keystones in the south walk - of the Decollation of St John, Annunciation, and Visitation (SFG, SHG, and SIG respectively) - are hard to explain: perhaps they anticipated and were meant to interact with a different vault iconography; perhaps they were intended for elsewhere, and were installed here when plans changed; perhaps they were never meant to be part of any totalizing scheme, and merely stand alone (the Johannine scenes perhaps allude to the patron, John Salmon: see n.107 above). The keystones of the inner wall arches in this south walk (boss ‘0’ in each bay) make a similarly puzzling set – they too would have had to have been installed before the vaulting proper could begin, but no pattern or logic is discernible. Many are foliate; SA0 and SC0 are figural and are in a comparable hand to the east walk genre keystones (compare SC0 and ECG, both of which resemble
contemporary sculptural work at Cley discussed in Chapter 1.3). SH0 appears to be a lone narrative scene but it is not clear what it shows.

The decision to begin a major cycle of Apocalypse imagery seems to have been taken, therefore, only at the time of construction of the actual vaulting of the south walk bays A-J, and not before. We have already ascribed the dates 1313-1330 to these bays based on Worstead’s *Apologia*: within this bracket it is very difficult to guess exactly what construction was going on when based on records of expenditure, though Fernie and Whittingham have tried: it seems vaulting materials (‘ogives’ or vault ribs, wooden spars ‘staying’, and 16 large lumps of stone (for bosses?) at 7d each, began to be purchased only in 1324-5. In 1326-7 tiles were bought for the backing of vaulting, along with 30 lumps of stone (‘gobetz’) at 5d each. Simon Hue is named in 1326-7 as receiving garments for his services; Fernie and Whittingham suggest he is a carver, working on bosses (this is conjecture – his occupation is not stated – but it is plausible). It seems sensible to use 1325-30 as a plausible date for the vaulting of south bays A-J with their Apocalypse imagery.

We might ask, in the context of a history of figural boss sculpture, why an Apocalypse cycle – an unusual choice for a cloister – seemed particularly desirable at this point in construction. Paul Binski has argued for the importance of Bishop Salmon’s patronage in determining the choice of the Apocalypse theme (given his Christian name, ‘John’). John Salmon died in 1325, with his executors making donations to the cloister works in 1326-7 and 1328-9. There are comparable instances of dedications and subject matter being determined by a patron’s name: John Salmon’s own family chapel, the Norwich Carnary chapel, built by 1316, was dedicated to another John (the Evangelist), and a comparable case might be found in the fact that patron of the Westminster Chapter

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104 Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 35 citing Roll 1040.
105 Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 35 citing Roll 1042.
106 Binski 2014a, 112 and pers. comm.
House Apocalypse (c.1400) was John of Northampton.\textsuperscript{107} Given the co-incidence of his legacy with the likely date of vaulting these bays (1325-1329/30 in my reading), the connection is plausible. Binski expands on the Salmon connection arguing that the lavish Lady Chapel at Ely (planned by 1321) would likely have prompted other East Anglian patrons to consider more extensive sculptural programmes, and this seems very plausible given Salmon’s strong links with Ely, where he was Prior from 1292. It is even possible that some workmen were engaged on both projects.\textsuperscript{108} Binski’s broader aim is to situate the cloister campaign in broader East Anglian and metropolitan frames of reference, rather than the more parochial concerns (such as town riots) proposed by Sekules. Given my argument (that the Apocalypse cycle was not envisaged until around 1325, more than 50 years after the destructive riots) there is indeed good reason to doubt Sekules’ suggested motive. Moreover, we can demonstrate that the schemes of boss imagery were worked out iteratively, campaign by campaign, rather than holistically planned - so they ought not to be read as a response to any single historical stimulus.

\textit{Possible manuscript models}

Nigel Morgan, in an unpublished paper, considered what sort of iconographical source might have been used as a basis for the Norwich iconography, and identified a group of illuminated Anglo-French prose manuscripts, listing New College MS.65 (c.1300), Bodleian Selden Supra 38 (c.1320), and Lincoln College Apocalypse (c.1330) as representative examples.\textsuperscript{109} Fernie and Whittingham believed that the purchase of a model manuscript was recorded in the communar rolls, which detail expenditure for ‘an Apocalypse’ in 1347, but Paul Binski and Julian Luxford have shown that this does not necessarily relate to the cloister works.\textsuperscript{110} In any case, some sort of manuscript source, if

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{107} Binski and Howard 2010, 190; citing Turner 1985, 94–97.
\item \textsuperscript{108} The Ramsey ‘kite’ form appears in the Lady Chapel arcading as at Norwich: Binski 2014a, 105–6.
\item \textsuperscript{109} Morgan, n.d. He stresses that none of these is a possible candidate for the \textit{exact} manuscript used; instead they suggest a plausible \textit{type} of manuscript.
\item \textsuperscript{110} Binski 2014a, 373, n.131.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
one was used, must have been in hand earlier than 1347, since the vaulting of bays A-J was complete by 1330.

Two other monumental cycles of Apocalypse imagery can be found in English art of this period, and both of these have been shown, in a similar way, to relate to manuscript sources: the east window at York Minster, produced 1405–8 by the glazier John Thornton, finds a partial model in Morgan’s same group of fourteenth-century French prose manuscripts; the cycle of paintings which adorn Westminster Abbey’s Chapter House, painted in the late fifteenth century, follows a Latin Apocalypse then in the Abbey’s possession, Trinity MS B.10.2. At Norwich, however, the reliance on manuscript sources has perhaps been too readily stressed by previous commentators, who assume that the existence of a manuscript model provides sufficient explanation for the entire process of devising the sculptural programme. To understand the mixture of borrowing and invention at work in the bosses’ conception, it is necessary to probe the relationship between the manuscript illuminations and the bosses more closely. To what extent were the carvers faithful to, or divergent from, their (hypothetical) model?

Taking Bodleian MS Selden Supra 38 as a representative example of Morgan’s suggested group, it becomes clear that, in most cases, the boss carvers have chosen the same verses/scenes to illustrate as those chosen by the illuminators: of the thirty-seven bosses of Apocalypse scenes in south bays A-J, only five do not have direct equivalent images

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112 Binski and Howard 2010, 190 A further cycle of paintings almost certainly existed in the Chapter House at Coventry: see Gill and Morris 2001.
113 For this kind of thinking see James 1931, 18, who lists the bosses (along with the York window and Westminster Chapter House) as being ‘plainly copied from MSS’. Later statements of the same thought are Sekules 2006, 294; Rose 1997, 42, who states that the bosses are “no doubt copied from […] a manuscript”. Lindley 1987, 26, is not quite as explicit, but does connect the MS to the sculpture rather directly. The general notion that the micro-arts anticipate the macro can be traced back at least as far as Panofsky 1971, 1:21-90 and passim.
in Selden Supra 38, and of these only 2 do not have equivalents elsewhere in Morgan’s group.\(^{114}\) Neither Selden Supra 38 nor the Norwich bosses offer an illustration of Rev. Chapter 2-3 (the letters to the churches); both skip from Chapter 1 to Chapter 4. To an extent this correspondence of inclusion and omission is to be expected since in both cases it is the pivotal narrative verses which are illustrated, but in many cases there are very striking similarities between the illuminations and the boss carvings, with minute iconographical details closely corresponding. Boss SC4, for example, illustrating Rev. 1. 5:6, corresponds very closely to Selden Supra 38 f.54v, in terms of layout and various details such as the attire of the angels and their carrying gold harps [Fig.62]. Boss SF7, Rev 1. 8:1-6, is nearly identical to its counterpart, Selden Supra f.64r, including the placement of the altar being censed, in the upper left of the composition in both cases [Fig.63]. In other instances there are some even more minute details which correspond, despite not being mentioned in the text: SF6, illustrating Rev. 1. 7:13, corresponds to Selden Supra 38 f.63: in both cases, the angel holds a palm frond (now denuded at Norwich). I agree with Morgan that it therefore seems likely that there existed at Norwich (or nearby) a manuscript, related to this loose ‘group’, that the carvers followed very closely indeed: perhaps they made no deviations at all, lifting the choice of narrative moments (and their iconography) wholesale from their manuscript model.

This correspondence of scene choice and iconography ought not to imply, however, that the boss carvers were merely slavish imitators of their model. We must take care to notice not only concordance, but also the invention and originality employed in adapting existing iconographies and compositions to make them function in three dimensions, as hemispherical ‘gobetz’.

In the first few bays of the south walk the transformations used to render manuscript illuminations (two-dimensional and contained within a rectangular frame) across convex hemispheres are relatively straightforward. The Son of Man enthroned, boss SA4,

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\(^{114}\) On the illuminations in Selden Supra 38 see Bartal 2010.
closely resembles Selden Supra 38 f.40r: to render it three dimensionally, the ‘throne’ has been interpreted as an architectural form, with a return at 45 degrees at each end, forming a plausible structure by ‘wrapping’ the two-dimensional version around the profile of the boss. Similarly, SB4 closely resembles f.49v: the mandorla becomes the central ‘face’ of the boss, with ranks of elders curving around the left and right-hand sides, and the creatures of the tetramorph to the top and bottom. In both cases the bosses can be thought of as having a flat front ‘face’, with subsidiary iconographical elements manipulated to bend around the sides of the boss, providing some visual interest from oblique viewing angles. This is in the tradition of the Westminster bosses cited above.

In later bays, though, the scenes are rendered in a more wholeheartedly spherical manner. SD2, showing the opening of the first seal, shares its basic elements with f.55v, but it re-forges them in a spherical whirlwind: the charge of the rider seems to carry right around the curvature of the boss (the same effect is evident in SD7, SD6). The ‘hell-mouth’ from which the fourth horseman emerges (SD7) is wonderfully modelled (there is no equivalent Selden Supra 38 illumination): its teeth and lips are visible to begin with, but from oblique angles we see a muzzle, eyes and ears, deeply undercut and wonderfully plastic.

This increasingly spherical approach to figuration often seems to give the boss sculptors a better means of representing the chaotic, elemental images of Revelation than their manuscript counterparts. Boss SE4 shows the ‘great earthquake’ of Rev 1. 6:12-17: embracing the hemisphere offered by the ‘gobet’ of stone, the sculptor offers a bulbous jumble of cloud, stars and faces, which captures the verses ‘the stars of the sky fell to the earth … the sky vanished like a scroll rolling itself up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place’.\(^{115}\) by contrast, the MS equivalent (f.59r) is staid and diagrammatic. Similarly chaotic is SG4 (the second trump), where boats float on a

\(^{115}\) Revelation 6:13-14.
spherical sea on contradictory axes. In the final bays of Worstead’s 1314-1330 campaign, this enthusiastically spherical arrangement begins to dominate not only the large boss in each bay (4), but the more minor bosses too (2,3,5,6). SI6 and SJ2,5,6 are good examples of this confident circularity: in SI6 the architectural elements (the Temple of God) curve markedly; in SJ6 the snaking bands of cloud press against the imagined sphere of the boss. SH1 and SH2, the fourth and fifth trumps, recast their various narrative elements together as conglomerate jumbles: this sculptural strategy, which amounts to a disregarding of pictorial norms and an abandoning of pictorial axes, is very different from the orderly transformation we observed in earlier bosses (such as SA4 and SB4): it speaks of a growing confidence in this developing sculptural manner, and it conveniently parallels the sense of disintegration in the Revelation narrative, with its successive destruction of established covenants, elemental and spatial norms, and other facets of terrestrial order.

Throughout these ten bays (A-J), the narrative scenes occupy only the central rib junctions, along the ridge of the vault (interspersed by some foliate/grotesque scenes at irregular intervals – SB6, SC6, SE6, SH7). The subsidiary pairs of lierne junctions (boss 3 and 5 in each bay) are mostly foliate bosses, but there are some exceptions: SA3 shows an angel with a trumpet, perhaps announcing the beginning of the Revelation sequence: his distinctive upper lip suggests this boss might be by the ‘philtrum master’ of the east walk. Grotesques, green men and animals feature in SB5, SC5, SC3, respectively. SJ3 shows three youthful figures; SJ5 shows mounted men playing instruments. The faces of a man and a woman appear in bosses SE3&5: these ought to be compared to the contemporaneous corbels at Cley (see my Chapter 1.3), where the woman’s face has a similar set and is similarly sporting a ‘gorget’. Indeed, the many instances of stylistic correspondence between the south and east walk and the sculpture at Cley suggest something of a Ramsey ‘house style’ in the years 1300-1330, with specialists in figural carving producing characterful, humorous, and formally innovative sculpture.
Sculptural hiatus in the cloister, 1330-1411

John de Worstead’s Apologia gives us 1330 as a terminus ante quem for the completion of the 10 bays (south A-J). After 1330, no vaulting took place until 1411. To the decades immediately following 1330, I ascribe only ongoing work on the garth wall throughout the cloister, with the incorporation some of the duplicate garth-wall keystones left over from the south walk work, as well as a variety of ad hoc creations. In 1335 William and John Ramsey were paid for a trip up from London, and two new templates were bought/made for them: it seems sensible to see these two templates as the templates for the tracery of the south and west walks, which alternate design. William and John were presumably engaged in constructing this south/west tracery work, as well as the completion of the garth wall, until 1349, when they both died, and works ceased. West bay J has wooden tracery: this has sometimes been seen as an economy attributable to the Black Death years. Work on the tracery recommenced in 1355 and continued until 1394, with bays traditionally attributed to John Attegrene (north K-J, 1350-57) and Robert Wadhurst (north I-B, 1385-6). Work on the garth wall or inner walls of the west and north ranges could also have been ongoing. The prolonged campaign for the garth wall and tracery (1313-1393 in total, for the south, west and north) goes some way to explaining the jumbled nature of the garthside keystones and their varied styles and subject matter. In 1394 one John Grew spent a week cleaning up the cloister; we can assume that the external structure (garth wall, and its tracery) was more or less complete by then. There is no evidence that any construction at all took place between 1394 and 1411.

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116 Between 1336 and 1346 there was frequent expenditure on marble, which is used only for the columns of the garth wall and inner wall: this was presumably a period of wall construction, rather than vault construction. Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 36–38.
117 Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 36 citing Roll 1136.
118 Sekules 2006, 289 quoting Fernie.
119 Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 41 citing Roll 1062.
1.3 Relevant local work taking place concurrently

A number of projects underway in Norwich and in the South East more broadly c.1300-1330 exhibit comparable sculptural elements and ought to be related to the cloister work.

Vaulted porches were being built for St Stephen’s Church, Norwich, c.1300. The south porch is the earliest extant vaulted porch in Norwich, and (along with the cloister) forms, according to Helen Lunnon, part of an investigation by Norwich masons into ‘vaulted fore-buildings’.\(^{120}\) The porch hosts two bosses of the martyrdom of St Stephen (St Laurence rescuing a soul from a demon; St Stephen’s martyrdom [Fig.64]). Given that the cathedral priory was patron of St Stephen’s, it seems possible that the Ramseys or the figural sculptors with whom they worked were also responsible for these bosses. They are nicely bevelled and inventive in the way they compress the narratives to fit the space: the two figures who lean in to stone Stephen form the upper curves of the boss (compare one of the Westminster Muniment room bosses [Fig.56]).

The Ramsey company, responsible for the first phase cloister work, were prolific local builders in the first half of the fourteenth century. The dynastic connections between three generations of Ramsey builders were sketched by Arthur Whittingham in 1980 article.\(^ {121}\) I do not intend to rehearse Whittingham’s attributions, but will briefly comment on those ‘Ramsey’ projects were sculpture featured prominently.

The Carnary Chapel, Norwich was built by August 1316.\(^ {122}\) This was a chapel for a college of secular priests founded by Bishop Salmon.\(^ {123}\) It was originally home to an

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\(^{120}\) Lunnon 2012, 116–17; citing Blomefield 1806a, 4:145–46.

\(^{121}\) For the Ramseys, see A. B. Whittingham 1980; also J. Harvey and Oswald 1954.

\(^{122}\) Described as ‘newly built’ in 1319: see Binski 2014a, 106 who sets out the evidence in fn.144. There are tracery forms shared between it, the cloister, and the Ethelbert Gate: Binski 2014a, 108.

\(^{123}\) Lunnon 2012, 166; citing Emery 1996, 1:136; also Binski 2014a, 106.
amount of sculpture, with large images in niches on buttresses; only the bosses in the porch remain.124 They are finely carved and purely foliate [Fig.65];125 more restrained and decorous than the contemporaneous work in the Bishop’s Palace porch, c.1320.126 This porch, known as ‘Salmon’s Porch’, is badly weathered, but has a tierceron vault with fifteen bosses, a mixture of foliate and grotesque subjects similar to the bosses of cloister bays EF and EM, and to the later parish church porches of Cley and Walpole St Peter. The foliate bosses [Fig.66] are more like those in the Carnary porch and Ethelbert Gate and less like those in the cloister, which are ‘bunched, alert and more variegated’.127 The poor condition of the bosses leaves only a few subjects identifiable: ‘lust’, ‘simony’, ‘lions fighting’, ‘gossips talk’; a woman prays; some show fragments of beasts; one shows a priest or bishop: overall, we seem to see a mixture of virtue and vice, without a discernible governing pattern.128

The Ramseys also specialised in richly sculptural gates. The Ethelbert gate was designed and executed c.1310-1315 and accounted for in 1316-17.129 It has sculpted spandrels, niches for substantial sculpted figures, and a stone lierne vault of two bays with bosses at every junction.130 Most bosses are foliate, and deeply cut. Five head bosses appear in the cityward bay; the central head is a ‘green man’ [Fig.67] of c.1310, like cloister boss EM4; the mixture of foliage and faces is comparable to cloister bays ED, EF, EM, and

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125 Lunnon 2012, 166.
127 Binski 2014a, 108.
128 Nichols 2002, 244, 246, 276; Lunnon 2012, 165; citing J. Alexander and Binski 1987, 444.
129 Binski 2014a, 105. Precise dating of the gate remains contested; for references and summary see Sekules 1996, 200. Whittingham ascribes the work to William 2nd Ramsey; Binski (pers. comm.) raises the possibility of an even earlier dating, with the cityward face completed as early as 1300.
the sculptural manner is similar too. The mouldings of the cityward face of the
Ezelbert gate feature a repeating lions-head motif; this recurring Ramsey trope can be
observed in boss SGG and on the Prior’s Door. Another gate, the so-called ‘Arminghall
Arch’, c.1330-40, once the part of the Norwich Carmelite Priory, is similarly elaborately
sculpted, with figural niches flanking the doorway, a bearded face as keystone, and
vigorous foliage inhabited by beasts.131 Its figures resemble those of both the Ethelbert
gate and Prior’s Door, as well as the richly sculptured arcading from the Ely Lady
Chapel (in terms of the cusped ogee niches and figures’ poses).132 The correspondence
of all these details paints a picture of a strong local tradition of sculptural decoration,
and raises the possibility that the Ramseys used the same figural sculptors on multiple
projects. The additional attribution of the important gate at St Benet’s Holm to the
Ramseys has been called into question by Julian Luxford, but it remains an important
example in the canon of elaborately sculpted Benedictine projects in East Anglia.133

Outside Norwich, At St Margaret’s Church, Cley-next-the-Sea, work on the nave and
aisles was underway c.1320-1330 and managed by the Ramseys.134 There are no bosses,
but other sculptural details are very comparable to those in the cathedral cloister.135 In
the south aisle, we find corbels of jocular subjects: in the first bay, a rather sombre head;
in the second, a violin player; in the third, a dancing figure; in the easternmost corbel, a
man bares his bottom [Fig.68]. On the equivalent corbels inside the nave (south side)
there are two more musicians (one very elegantly twisting to play a pipe with one hand
and a drum with another [Fig.69]; another back-turned (playing a violin); one back-

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131 Lindley 1987 passim. The arch is now installed in the Norwich Magistrates Court.
Whittingham again proposes William 2nd Ramsey as a possible master mason: A. B.
Whittingham 1980, 289.
132 Lindley 1987; for the similar figure of Solomon at Ely see Binski 2014a, 197.
133 Luxford 2014, n.37.
134 Whittingham observed two distinct phases of work at Cley, and attributed them to
different Ramseys on stylistic grounds. He proposed that control of the works
transferred from John 1st to his nephew William 2nd in 1325, since the same change is
recorded as occurring at the cloister site in the same year: A. B. Whittingham 1980, 285.
135 The south porch is a later addition, as discussed in Chapter 3. The south door is
original, however, with its cusped ogee and typically Ramsey lion-head-stops.
turned, fighting a dragon; there are also two lions. These figures are all beautifully cut, with twisting postures and crossed legs rendered naturalistically, often with a knee being drawn around and back into the wall. Many make a feature of this twisting back-turning. In the case of the musician with the pipe and drum, this serves to interest the viewer as they walk past the figure; he seems to turn on the spot. In certain details (headdress, instruments, posture) and in figural style these figures are a reasonable match for jongleuri c musicians produced contemporaneously in the cloister (bosses ECG, SE3,5, EBG): one figural sculptor could have worked on both projects.

A number of Ramsey projects were underway in London during the same period, including St Mary Undercroft (the lower chapel at St Stephen’s Westminster), which was vaulted c.1340, and featured bosses of the early Lincoln/Exeter type. The vault of the lower chapel is the same basic type as the Ethelbert Gate, though it employs triradials as at Bristol and Pershore. Boss-wise, the most interesting comparison is the St Lawrence boss in the Westernmost bay, no longer extant: records of it show a man gripping the feet of the saint, bent backwards around the curvature of the boss and so offering oblique interest [Figs. 70]. The other St Stephen's bosses are less formally remarkable.

The Lady Chapel at Ely is another significant project attributed to Ramsey influence, in underlying authorship if not in every detail. The Lady Chapel was certainly under construction 1321 (foundation laid) to 1349 (glazing underway), but probably in

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136 The date is proposed by James Hillson: Hillson 2018, forthcoming; using evidence from Newton 2016; a similar date is also proposed in Colvin 1963, 513. The Ramseys had also vaulted the cloisters at St Paul’s Cathedral (no longer extant) and the cloisters at Westminster Abbey: A. B. Whittingham 1980, 286–87; Woodman 1996, 164–65.
137 Binski 2014a, 204.
138 Thanks to James Hillson for this reference. The extant boss is a nineteenth-century version and the back-bent man is omitted.
139 There is documentary evidence of a mason ‘John’, another ‘William Ramsey’; also considerable stylistic evidence, set out by Binski 2014a, 192, 204–5.
gestation beforehand. The richness of sculpture at ground level, in the extended Marian programme of the *Life and Miracles of the Virgin*, is noteworthy; it demands ‘movement, close looking and polyfocal ponderation’ from a viewer. Figures, some almost life size, would have adorned the niches. This is evidence, if more is required, that the Ramseys either had within their company or were close collaborators with a number of expert figural sculptors.

As well as the arcading, there is also the network of bosses in the vault, which has never been the subject of much scholarly consideration, and never compared to other boss sculpture. There has been some controversy regarding the dating of this vault: Frank Woodman made an ambitious re-dating to c.1450, motivated by the unsatisfactory junction between the vault and the rest of the chapel. This argument must be rejected, since documentary and stylistic evidence abounds to support a mid-1340s date for the vault: painted details on the vault (newly noted) are suggestive of a 1340s date; many details of hair and costume depicted in the bosses, from curled hairdos to beards to gorgets, are typical of the mid-fourteenth century and cannot agree with a much later date [Fig.71]. Woodman does make valid points regarding various inelegant structural junctions, but these would be consistent with a change in design and/or personnel, and perhaps a relinquishing of Ramsey control: a brief separation between the rest of the construction and the vault campaign, with vaulting taking place between 1345 and 1349-53, would also explain the stylistic discontinuity between the figure sculpture of the arcading and that of the bosses, which is marked.

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140 See Binski 2014a, 189 for the commencement date, and pp.194-229 for the chapel’s construction.
141 Binski 2014a, 209.
142 Some fragments survive in the stone store: Binski 2014a, 199; Lindley 1985, 212.
143 Cave 1948, 19 notes only their ‘local style’; the most extensive treatment is Cave 1932; Woodman 1984 uses the floral bosses as part of his argument but ignores the others.
144 Woodman 1984.
145 Binski 2014a, 214–17 and a forthcoming publication, Binski and Hawkins.
The boss programme is not very systematic; there is only a loose chronology between the Fall (centre bay) and the Glorification of the Virgin (eastern bay), via the scenes of the Incarnation and the Assumption, but with the order rather jumbled. There is no pattern which dictates which bosses are foliate and which are figural within bays, but there is a concentration of figural bosses (particularly along the ridge rib) in the eastern half of the Chapel, beyond the supposed position of the screen, and there are no narrative bosses to the west of this, save one. All the narrative scenes are composed of short, stumpy figures with large, distinctive heads; like those of south bays D-I at Norwich but even more so, they are bold in their bending of figures across hemispheres. Bosses such as the Fall and the Annunciation contort their figures massively, bending heads backwards to greet an oblique viewer [Fig.72]. There are compositional similarities between them and the roughly contemporary work at Tewkesbury, discussed below (compare Ascension scenes [Figs.81,82]) - but the Ely examples are much more curvaceous, bending their figures backwards to form bulbous bosses, compressing and moulding figures to create a single spherical mass. The Westernmost bay hosts a scene of the invention of St Etheldreda’s relics: this is so free in its distortion of spatial axes that it is rather hard to decipher from ground level [Fig.73]. The vault at Ely, then, for all its figural crudity, narrative incoherence, and structural oddities, is a very important step in the development of our bevelled East Anglian boss idiom, and was perhaps an important model for the fifteenth-century developments I describe in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. The programme is much less comprehensive than the Apocalypse cycle recently begun at Norwich, but the Ely bosses are equally characterful in their approach to the problem of distributing figures within a boss.

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146 Binski 2014a, 194; Dixon 2002.
1.4 Other boss sculpture in the fourteenth century

Throughout the fourteenth century, alongside the work described at Norwich and nearby, figural boss sculpture became more and more common across the south of England. The development of lierne vaults increased the number of opportunities for small bosses; enthusiasm for bosses ensured that liernes were a popular choice of vault. Foliate bosses were nevertheless more common than figural bosses (perhaps because the complexity of liernes only permits small, globular junctions), and cohesive narrative sequences were the exception rather than the rule.

At Exeter, a series of bosses was begun in about 1300 and was in progress for at least 50 years. Unlike Norwich and Tewkesbury (below), there is no narrative scheme governing the choice of subjects at Exeter (although some groupings have been suggested). The bosses vary greatly in subject matter and in quality. As at Norwich, spatial gags sit happily alongside more weighty subjects: south transept 275A shows a man who appears to swallow the ridge rib [Fig. 74] (cf. the Norwich acrobat, EF5, or the St Mary Undercroft St Lawrence). The earliest Exeter bosses, like the earliest Norwich bosses and their antecedents at Lincoln, tend to set narrative scenes on a bed or wreath of foliage [Fig. 75]. Some of these foliate backed bosses are rather crude in execution. Some bosses (some aisle bays; the vault beneath pulpitum screen, c.1324) are purely foliate, but many are deeply cut and ‘alert’ like those of Norwich east walk. In the western bays of the north nave aisle the foliate bosses are emphatically spherical: the

147 The general observation is made by Cave 1948, 11.
148 This is mentioned by Monckton 2006, 254–55; on vaulting generally see Dentzer 2017.
149 Cave 1948, 4; the same observation is made of the West Country in Andrew 2011, 11.
150 The Exeter boss literature is extensive, beginning with Prideaux 1910; the best summary and chronology is Henry and Hulbert, n.d.
151 A pun can be made here: the two meanings of ‘gag’ – joking and choking – both derive from the Old Norse gaghils, to throw the neck back.
152 The same thing occurs nearby at Ottery St Mary – see Cave 1948 pl.170-173.
boss protrudes markedly from the ribs and the naturalistic leaves adhere to an imagined hemisphere [Fig. 76]. This spherical quality echoes the Norwich south walk, and anticipates the more pronouncedly spherical bosses of the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{153} Bosses in the Exeter crossing vault and nave are comparable to the grander Norwich south walk scenes such SG4, in terms of their rhythmic modulation of the surface and their gentle bevelling of the composition’s edges. The finest is of St Thomas of Canterbury, 235, c.1350 [Fig. 77]: this carries on the formal developments from the Norwich south walk (and from Tewkesbury – see below), making a lovely play between the spatial naturalism of the scene and the twisting modifications required at the edge in order to conform the scene to the circular format. Similar (if less pronounced) inflections are found in the bosses by the Master of the Lions, 184 and 188 [Fig. 78]. This kind of distortion, which pits naturalistic forms against the governing hemispherical shape of the boss, anticipates the fifteenth-century Norwich bosses.

Also of great interest is the series of bosses at Tewkesbury Abbey: running west to east through the nave and chancel (c.1321-c.1350) there are scenes of the Life of Christ, from the Nativity (west end) to the Coronation of the Virgin and Christ in Glory, via the Passion, along with the Evangelists’ symbols and many angels.\textsuperscript{154} These stone bosses, contemporaneous with the Apocalypse programme at Norwich, are comparable both in their formal characteristics and in their original attempt to use sequential bosses to form a narrative sequence. Formally speaking, they are neatly cut with excellent modelling. Like the early bosses of the Norwich south walk and the finest contemporaneous examples from Exeter they tend to adjust the poses of figures in order to make the scene conform to a circular format (rather than warping figures themselves): in the Scourging, for example, the whips follow the edge of the boss, while the figures lean in toward Christ [Fig. 79]. A group of five ‘crowd scenes’ at Tewkesbury seem to be the work of one hand (Last Supper, Entry into Jerusalem, Betrayal,

\textsuperscript{153} The same effect is seen in figural bosses such as Exeter nos.85 and 219, both in the presbytery.

\textsuperscript{154} Cave 1929; 1948, 11–12, 19; Kendrick and Morris 2000.
Ascension, Pentecost): they are each busy with many different figures arranged them in a patterned manner, each head visible, with faces arranged radially around the Ascending Christ or inclined toward the Betrayal [Fig.80]. It is these intricate crowd scenes which make Tewkesbury so important in the progression of boss sculpture I am tracing: they anticipate the delicate work of the 1420s bosses at Norwich. The Ascension formula first found here at Tewkesbury, with delicately scalloped cloud, would go on to be used at Ely c.1350, and then subsequently in the fifteenth-century Norfolk boss tradition described in Chapter 3; similarly, the Resurrection format used here (resembling Norwich EB4) is the basis for the heavily distorted fifteenth-century versions discussed in Chapter 3. Nonetheless, the Tewkesbury bosses are flatter and more ‘plate like’ than similar bosses at Ely: compare the two Ascensions [Figs.81,82].

Many bosses from this mid-century period are ‘traditional’ in their spatial arrangement: fourteenth-century bosses at Lichfield and fragments surviving at Abbey Dore (Coronation of the Virgin) evidence the continuation of the thirteenth-century ‘bower/wreath’ type as perfected at Lincoln; at Salle in Norfolk there are a series of wooden bosses in the chancel, which are flat and plate-like, showing scenes of the life of Christ resembling those at Tewkesbury [Fig.83]. At some sites, however, we see the first flickerings of the free and witty spatial play which characterises later work at Norwich. A more spatially inventive Coronation of the Virgin can be found under the Percy Screen at Beverly Minster, Yorkshire, for example [Fig.84]. At York Minster, there is an intriguing series of Marian bosses in a very unusual stylistic idiom, dating from c.1360 [Figs.157-159]. The bosses now visible are nineteenth-century copies, following a fire in 1840, after engravings of the originals. The choice of Marian subjects anticipates the ‘Joys of the Virgin’ boss sequences in fifteenth-century Norfolk churches discussed in Chapter 3. Formally speaking these bosses are remarkable for their free manipulation of pictorial space, although they are rather more mannered and less

\[155\] Cave 1929, 14 date uncertain.
\[156\] My thanks to James Hillson for this reference. For the engravings see J. Browne 1847 pl.XCVI-CXVIII, my Figs.157-159.
curvaceous than what would follow at Norwich. In the Ascension, the soles of Christ’s feet, visible as he ascends, are surrounded by heads of the apostles, peeping radially like petals around a flower. The Resurrection and Nativity share their basic arrangement with Tewkesbury, but move figures onto the bosses’ sides, offering extreme oblique interest in the interstitial spaces between ribs. These unusual bosses are an important early instance of the boss seen as an opportunity for irregularity and play. In a similar vein, The Chapel of Our Lady of the Pew, Westminster, has an interesting Assumption boss c.1380, which makes use of all the interstitial spaces between ribs, putting an angel’s head in each one [Fig.85]. By the second half of the fourteenth century, figural bosses have become an opportunity for sculptural punning.

St Gregory, Norwich has vaulted porches from the very end of the century (c.1394); the south porch hosts a mixture of figural bosses; some are playful in form and subject matter, resembling examples from St Stephen’s Westminster and Exeter where vault ribs become something to be straddled or ingested [Fig.86]; others bend figures to form pleasing spheres. Elsewhere in East Anglia, fourteenth-century cloister builders at the Franciscan Friary at Great Yarmouth evidently saw the low, visible vaults as opportunities to display their work prominently and therefore to show off: the Friary was extended c.1356 to create a cloister; fragments and two bays which survive evidence an elaborate collection of bosses. The Last Supper boss [Fig.87] exhibits a confident curvature of the dining table, a feature which would recur in the 1420s boss of a similar subject at Norwich.

Further away from Norwich, and later in the century, cloister builders at Worcester and Canterbury (and, pushing into the fifteenth century, at Lacock and Wells) rejected the more modern fan vault (as employed at Gloucester, 1351-1377) and chose a passé

157 Cave 1948 pl.232.
158 For dating see J. Harvey and Oswald 1954, 342.
159 For the Friary’s history see Vivienne Coad’s contribution in “Report of the Summer Meeting of the Royal Archaeological Institute at Norwich in 1979” 1980, 308–9
tierceron with liernes with more opportunities for bosses.\textsuperscript{160} Worcester’s cloister bosses (c.1386-1430s) are a mixture of heraldic and figural, with some bower-like examples in the Lincoln tradition and some more projective angels.\textsuperscript{161} Many of these bosses abandon the idea of a governing hemispherical form entirely; angels and evangelist symbols float free of the ribs which used to contain them, and in this respect Worcester is something of a unicum. The Canterbury cloister, remodelled 1397 onwards by Master Mason Stephen Lote, has a number of formally playful examples: the scheme is largely heraldic, but there are some more jongleuric additions from c.1400, which seem to play with the boss as a ‘ground’ upon which figures can be posed freely [Figs.88].\textsuperscript{162} Lacock’s cloister (probably 1400-1420) hosts bosses which are even more bulbous and spherical than those seen at Great Yarmouth; they are mainly animal and genre scenes; one shows a mermaid, a close copy of the same subject at Canterbury [Fig.89].\textsuperscript{163}

A number of bosses from the end of the fourteenth and very beginning of the fifteenth century seem to exhibit the kind of bulbous roundness that would become such a feature of the 1411-30 style in Norfolk. In the south aisle of the nave at Winchester (1371-1390), bosses of a sow with piglets and a man baiting a bull both do so [Fig.90]. There is a fascinating boss in the twelfth bay which Cave describes as an ‘extraordinary picture, badly executed with hopeless perspective, of a dragon in the outer court of a castle’: the castle seems to have been turned ‘inside out’; its walls hug the bevelled sides of the bosses, leaving an open central space for the dragon to inhabit [Fig.91].\textsuperscript{164} This kind of free manipulation is vital to the Norwich idiom but is unusual at this early date. The very small, late bosses in the fan vaulting at Sherborne Abbey are similarly

\textsuperscript{160} Monckton 2006, 253.
\textsuperscript{161} Monckton 2006, 254; Cave 1948, 13, 220.
\textsuperscript{162} Woodman 1981, 164–66.
\textsuperscript{163} Monckton 2006, 255; Cave 1948, 196, giving “fifteenth century” as a likely date.
\textsuperscript{164} Cave 1976, 13–15.
interesting for the way they delight in adhering to the circle/hemisphere; bosses in the aisles of the Canterbury nave are also distinctive, with some back-turned heads that greet an approaching viewer.\textsuperscript{165}

\textit{Conclusion}

Boss sculpture evolved throughout the fourteenth century, with playful approaches to sculptural space beginning to be employed in porches, cloisters, and aisles, where vaults were low enough to be visible and to reward close inspection. Following the early Norwich campaign (1297-1330), the ambitious boss programmes at Tewkesbury and Exeter, alongside less extensive (but no less inventive) groups of bosses elsewhere, added to a growing repertoire of ways of cramming busy figural scenes into the restricted space of a circular boss. At York, Great Yarmouth, and at Winchester, bosses survive which employ spatially distortive manoeuvres in order to offer oblique interest for viewers, spreading scenes across both the ‘face’ and the ‘sides’ of a boss, sometimes (as at York) compromising all pictorial ‘naturalism’ in favour of spatially witty arrangements. After 1350, bosses had in some places begun to be seen as opportunities for sculptural play, novel re-workings of existing iconography, and humorous detail which would appeal to and encourage oblique viewing. We cannot know whether the sculptors who would come to work at Norwich in the 1411-1430 campaign had seen these bosses, but it is significant that, across the south of England, sculptors who tackled the challenge of producing figural bosses felt able to experiment.

This account has necessarily been only a glancing summary of the key sites for boss sculpture, and has not been able to analyse the details of the boss programmes at each site, many of which intermingle sacred and jocular iconography in complex ways. A more extensive study, building on Cave’s work, would hope to survey boss sculpture comprehensively from a formal point of view, tracing the transfer of sculptural ideas

\textsuperscript{165} Cave 1948, 186 pl.64.
from site to site. There are some obvious instances of borrowing between sites – between York and Tewkesbury, for example, or between Canterbury and Lacock – and a common feature of the corpus seems to be the mixing of borrowing and invention: very often the general arrangement of a scene (eg. the Ascension) is pre-existing within the tradition, but the precise way it is rendered sculpturally (particularly in terms of the interstitial spaces between the various ribs) varies from site to site. The growing interest in curvature and distortion, evident at Great Yarmouth, Wells, York, and Canterbury paved the way for the revolution in boss sculpture which was to occur at Norwich in the early fifteenth century. That revolution is described in the next chapter.
Chapter 2  The later bosses at Norwich (1411-1430)

This chapter focusses on the fifteenth-century bosses of the Norwich cloister, which represent the maturation of the stylistic experiments of the earlier campaigns. The distinctive, curvaceous idiom developed in these bosses is the principal focus of this thesis.

2.1 Chronology and iconography of the fifteenth-century bosses

This section continues the approach employed in Chapter 1.2, drawing together existing accounts of the cloisters’ building and attempting to assemble from them a cohesive account of the construction sequence and the iconography of the fifteenth-century bosses.¹⁶⁶

As described in Chapter 1.2, scholars have tended to refer to Registrum Primum for a general outline of the order in which the new cloister was built. This register sets out the sequence of events: work was begun in the east walk, and this east walk along with most of the south walk was completed under the patronage of John Salmon. The register then mentions that the north walk was completed and vaulted at the expense of Master Henry Well and Master John Hancock; the section from the towels to the entrance of the guest house (SK – WC) at the expense of Geoffrey of Simonds; and from here to church door (WD – WL) at the expense of Bishop Wakering, finishing in 1430. It is not clear from the text whether the order in which the list is given is strictly the order in which events happened or whether it is arbitrary. It is my contention, though, that the order in which the events are listed reflects the chronology of building campaigns more directly than has sometimes been assumed: I argue, in accordance with Fernie and Whittingham (but contra Sekules, Rose, and Woodman) that the evidence (documentary, archaeological, stylistic) seems to suggest that, as described in the register, the North

¹⁶⁶ For the existing accounts see my n.83, above.
walk was vaulted prior to the majority of the west walk.\textsuperscript{167} The notion that the cloister construction proceeded as a continuous clockwise unfolding from the north east corner is seductively simple, deriving from chronology of the garth-side tracery - but this pattern cannot be straightforwardly transferred to the vaulting. The precise order of the north and west walks’ vault construction may seem a minor detail, but it helps to explain otherwise puzzling features of the figurative programme and is key to a nuanced understanding of the development of this distinctive sculptural style.

\textit{South/west corner vaulting (south K - west C)}

‘… The part from the towels with the entrance to the refectory, the lavatories, and the entrance to the hall of the guest house was made at the expense of Geoffrey of Simonds, rector of the Marsh, namely 100 pounds.’

Despite its general accuracy, the Register is erratic here in listing the north walk before the south west corner.\textsuperscript{168} Geoffrey of Simonds’ bequest, made in 1411, seems to have prompted (or at least facilitated) a new campaign of works, the vaulting of five bays around the south/west corner, from SK to WC. Expenses in 1411 suggest that preparations were underway for upcoming works, under master mason Hervey Lyng: the tracing house lock was mended,\textsuperscript{169} scales bought, along with 100\textsuperscript{1}ft of ‘oggyes’, 43\textsuperscript{1}ft

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{167} The notion of the west walk’s priority stems from Cranage and Tristram 1938, 8; it recurs in Curteis and Paine 1992, 2; Woodman 1996, 172–74; Rose 1997, 42; Sekules 2006, 289.
\textsuperscript{168} It is indeed puzzling that the \textit{Registrum Primum} should discuss this south/west corner work \textit{after} mentioning the north walk work, given that the account generally proceeds chronologically. We know that Simonds’ legacy began immediately, with an £18 payment in 1411 (Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 41), whereas the donations from John Hancock/Henry of Wells (which were to fund the north walk vaulting) were not made until 1423–6, so the general idea that the south-west corner was vaulted before the north walk seems beyond dispute. The confusion might arise from the fact that boss cutting for the north walk could have been occurring around this time, as I argue below.
\textsuperscript{169} Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 41, citing Roll 1068.
\end{footnotesize}
of voussoirs, 13 bases, 18 keystones at 4s each, and 12 ‘rechements’ (wall arches?). Similar expenses occurred in 1412-13, and in 1413-4 templates and tools for marble were bought, including wainscot for molds (perhaps vaulting).

The new vaulting campaign, funded by Simonds’ legacy, began where the earlier work (under John Worstead) had left off in 1330, with the south bays K,L, with vaulting beginning in 1415-16. In 1336 repairs had been made ‘with board’ on this south/west corner: whatever temporary structure was here was in dire need of work by 1411. Fernie and Whittingham separate the vault work in bays K,L from work on west bays A-C which were vaulted under a separate contract, under master masons James and John Woderuf.

The bosses of K and L are, stylistically and iconographically, something of a bricolage. The first two bays (SK&SL), which Fernie and Whittingham ascribe to the dates 1415-16, continue the Apocalypse cycle only in their central bosses (the War in Heaven Rev. XII.7 in SK4; Serpent casting water Rev XII.15-16 in SL4), and have other bosses at all the secondary junctions. The strategy developed in south A-J, of filling all the bosses along the central ridge with Apocalypse imagery, is abandoned: we find foliate bosses at all secondary junctions of south K (for example, at SK6 and SK2, where the established pattern would lead us expect Apocalypse scenes). The foliage is very delicately cut (a significant change from the 1320s bosses). The south/west corner bay, L, differs again: genre scenes occupy all secondary junctions. SL2 and SL3 mirror each other, with their pairs of combatants; a green man occupies SL5. SL6 is a remarkable boss stylistically speaking, and I discuss it in Chapter 2.2.

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170 Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 41, citing Roll 1068.
171 Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 41, citing Roll 1068.
172 Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 41, citing Roll 1069.
It seems, however, there must have been more bosses being cut around 1415 than the small group of bosses required to vault the bays south K,L (roughly 10-11). John Watlington and Bricius Dewcheman (‘the Dutchman’) - both ‘gravours’ - were each paid for 33 weeks of work in 1415-16, with Brice paid for an additional 13 weeks on top of this.\(^{174}\) The accepted rule of thumb is that a figural boss represents two weeks of work for a skilled mason: in this single year, then, working a total of 79 man-weeks, we might expect that the two men carved around 40 bosses altogether.\(^{175}\) It is tempting to try to identify these bosses, for a number of distinctive ‘hands’ are evident in the figural work, but the exercise soon descends into confusion. We can, however, assert that boss cutting was taking place in 1415-16 on an extensive scale: more vaulting than just these two bays (K,L) was therefore either underway, or (more likely) was planned for coming years. Indeed, there are strong stylistic similarities between the fussy, fine work on bosses SL2, and SL4, and that of NA3, NA7, NB5: it seems possible that Watlington and Dewcheman could have been getting ahead, cutting bosses for the north walk in readiness for its vaulting, or perhaps for west bays A,B,C, or even a group of inner-wall keystones. It is impossible to identify the exact group: we merely know that the sculptural work done in these years exceeded the requirements of bays SK and SL.

*West walk, bays A-C*

Fernie and Whittingham assert that, following the vaulting of K,L, three bays were vaulted ‘by contract’ in 1420-1422, by James and John Woderuf, who were master masons from this point until the end of construction.\(^{176}\) These three bays are west A,B,C, taking the completed vaulting up to the door of the guest house hall. One subsidiary boss (WC5) shows a knight and a lady, bearing the arms of Knowles of

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\(^{174}\) Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 41–42, citing Roll 1070.  
\(^{175}\) See my Chapter 4, p.105.  
\(^{176}\) Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 42, citing Rolls 1073 and 1074.
Alysham, and of Beverley, respectively: a donor is recorded as giving £5 in memory of Sir Robert Knowles in 1421-2 (Roll 1074), so the heraldic evidence corroborates the dating.

The bosses of bays A,B,C do make sense as a group, though a group which contains a mixture of styles. Generally, there is an obvious stylistic step-change between the final south bay (SL) and the first west bay (WA) – particularly evident in the central bosses and their arrangement of figures.\(^\text{177}\) The pattern of distribution across the vault is rather like that in SK,SL, in that the Apocalypse scenes feature only at the centre of each bay (boss 4) and at the junction between each bay (boss 7/1).\(^\text{178}\) These Apocalypse scenes exhibit the distinctive warped-figure style which dominates the rest of the north and west walks. They have interesting perspectives and are of very complex sculptural conception (although they are straightforward when compared to the most virtuosic scenes of the north and west walks). There are a number of new idiomatic devices which will recur later in other bosses: the crowd of figures arranged around the bottom edge of the boss occurs first in WA4, WA7, WB4; the somewhat brittle distortion of architectural forms across the curve is found first in WB7, WC4.

Nigel Morgan, following E. W. Tristram, believed some of the west walk Apocalypse scenes to be out of order, although he did not analyse their iconography in detail.\(^\text{179}\) Nonetheless, he took this as evidence of the sculptors having departed from their original manuscript model, or having become confused following the purchase of a new manuscript in 1347. It seems, though, that the scenes of these first bays (A,B,C) are perfectly orderly, and much the same as those in south A-J in their following of Bodleian Selden Supra 38 and its cousins for their choice of episodes. WA7, which

\(^{177}\) There is then an unexplained change in stone colour between the vaulting of west A and west B.

\(^{178}\) Boss WA2 is an exception, identified as Rev. 1. 13:11 by Tristram (Cranage and Tristram 1938, 32), but perhaps merely a decorative scene. If it is Rev. 1. 13:11 it ought rather to be installed in place of WA6.

\(^{179}\) Morgan, n.d.; following Cranage and Tristram 1938, 32.
E. W. Tristram identifies as representing Rev. 1. 13:13 and believes to be misplaced, in fact represents Rev. 14:1-5, the elect (as opposed to the corrupt of the world) praising the Lamb in Heaven, and closely corresponds to Selden Supra 30 f.96r. Some figures are visibly singing ('they sang as it were a new song before the throne'), though the lamb has been defaced. Elsewhere there are original details in the sculpture which find no parallel in Selden Supra 38. In WA4, which illustrates Rev. 1. 13:2-4, there seems to be a deliberate representation of diversity in the crowd adoring the ‘beast’: whereas the south walk bosses showed nondescript figures, these are conspicuously a group of monks and townspeople (also in WB4); this diversity represents the 'tribes, tongues, and nations' who listen to his blasphemy: 'all who dwell on the earth will worship him' (Rev 1. 13:7-8).

The subsidiary bosses in these bays are either foliate (WA5,6, WB2,6, WC2,6) or grotesque: there is a group of paired combatants of uncertain significance: two dogs/bears (WA3), two cocks (WB5), a gryphon vs. a man (WB3), a man vs. a lion (WC3), all rendered as swelling spheres. Alongside these there is the Trinitarian image of the mercy-seat with donors at WC5. The keystones in the inner wall arches WB0 and WC0 are foliate, though set within WC0 is a half-open doorway, bearing the arms of the See of Norwich and the Cathedral Priory. It has been suggested that WA0 (showing the Trinity worshipped by angels) is, along with SL7, a later insertion, coeval with the installation of the lavers by the Woderufs in 1443-4, and this seems plausible.

North walk, bays A - L.

Theophilus, On Divers Arts, gives the Samson’s breaking of the lion’s jaws as a paradigm of a free sort of ornament: vessels should be decorated with ‘horsemen fighting against dragons, lions, or griffins, the image of Samson breaking the lion’s jaws, or anything you please’: Schapiro 2006, 194.

Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 43, citing Roll 1083.
It has sometimes been stated that the remaining bays of the west walk (D-L) were completed before the vaulting of the north walk. I believe, in accordance with Whittingham’s later pamphlet, that the work happened the other way around. This is for a number of reasons. First, the completion of the north walk before the west walk would explain why the Apocalypse iconography in the west walk is truncated and missing the final two chapters of the Revelation text (Rev. 21-22): if the north walk were completed first, the builders would have had to fit the Apocalypse into whatever space remained available, or (as they chose to do) truncate it. Secondly, the dates of the various bequests seem to put the north walk before the west walk: 1423/4 and 1425/6 for the north walk bequests; post-1425 for the west walk (bays D-L). Thirdly, the inner-wall columns of the north walk date from the fourteenth century, whereas those of the west walk are fifteenth-century, so the north walk was further advanced when vaulting began in the 1420s; fourthly, the wording of the Registrum Primum implies that the west walk came last (… ‘thus was completed’…). Finally, the stylistic superiority which has helped to shore up that idea that the north walk is the final act of bravura workmanship is questionable: both the north and the west walk feature virtuosic bosses, as discussed below, and the matter is not helped by the fact that the north walk bosses are mostly in better condition having been retouched more carefully, and also tend to be photographed in better light, given the south-facing aspect.

Between 1421 and 1423/4 the north walk was re-roofed and re-leaded, probably in anticipation of the commencement of vaulting. Master Henry of Wells, Archdeacon of Lincoln, then gave £40 in 1423/4; we can assume vaulting began soon after 1423/4.

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182 Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 43, are unclear on this point, but give dates of 1425 and after for the west walk, and 1425-6 for the north. Fernie 1993, 164, repeats this dating. Martial Rose implies the west walk preceded the north: Rose 1997, 42. Sekules 2006, 289, misrepresents Fernie and Whittingham, and explicitly places the west walk bosses at 1411-25 and the north walk bosses at 1423-28. Woodman 1996, 166, has the west walk being vaulted 1425 onwards and the north walk following it, 1427-8.

183 A. Whittingham 1981.

184 Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 42.
John Hancock, Rector of the Marsh, gave 23s 4d in 1425-6, by which time the vaulting was presumably underway.

There are a number of stylistic correspondences between the north walk bosses and the sections of the vaulting already complete by 1423. The device of placing a crowd of figures round the bottom edge of the boss, looking upward, which occurs in NB7, occurs first in WA4, WA7, and WB4. The flattening of architectural buildings into a thin, brittle surface that curves to follow the hemisphere of the boss, which appears in NA0, NA2, and perhaps NB4 to an extent, is found first in WB7, WC4. The fighting creatures in ND5 are not unlike those in WA3, WC3. I have already suggested that there are parallels too between some north bosses and SK,L bosses (compare NA3,5,6,7, NB2,5,6, with SK5,6, SL2,4,6; also NK5 with SL5): these correspondences, viewed altogether, support the idea that the extensive employment of gravours in 1415-6 indicates that they were getting ahead with sculptural work over and above the bays then in hand. John Horn, who worked as a gravour in 1421-2 whilst west A,B,C were being erected, could also have worked on some North walk bosses simultaneously. The inner wall keystone bosses in the north walk necessarily predate the vaulting proper: it is possible that Horn, or another carver, was working on them in 1421-2. Contra Binski I do not find any of the north walk bosses (apart from the garth-side keystones) to date from the c.1297-1330 east walk campaign, though the Resurrection appearances in north A,B,C are perhaps intended to harmonise with the earlier work in content and idiom.185

Alongside these ‘throwback’ bosses, however, we also see in this north walk an explosion of formal invention and a host of bravura sculptural conceits, including curvaceous fish-eye effects (NB4), axial distortions (NC4, NE4), complex, crowded narratives (NG4), cuboidal distortions (NH7), and moments of symmetry (NK1, NI6). These will be discussed at length in Chapter 2.2.

185 Binski 2014a, 112.
Choice of scenes in the north walk

Iconographically speaking, north bays A, B, C continue the sequence of Passion bosses of the east walk, with a sequence of Christ’s Resurrection appearances along the central line of bosses (flanked by foliate and jongleuric scenes at the subsidiary junctions), moving towards Pentecost in bay D and the first Acts of the Apostles. E. W. Tristram made the suggestion that the textual source for bays A-D is Mark 16: this explains puzzling scenes such as NC6,7 as the Apostles casting out devils and preaching to converts (Mark 16:16-17).\(^{186}\) From bay E onwards the iconographical scheme continues to have puzzling elements: it is a mélange in which many individual scenes and general themes can be identified, but no total explanatory pattern can be discerned. From bay E onwards, all central and subsidiary bosses are given over to hagiographic scenes, with no room for ornamental bosses. Bay E shows the martyrdom and assumption of John the Evangelist, the Death and Coronation of the Virgin, and the martyrdom of St James the Great – the Coronation is a particularly interesting variant of the usual composition, and shows her coronation by the Trinity: this important piece of iconography spawned local imitation which will be discussed in Chapter 3. Bay F then shows various miracles of the Virgin, along with scenes of St Clement. Bays G-K show scenes of: St Nicholas, St Edmund, St Edward, St John the Baptist, St Thomas à Becket, St Denis, St Lucy, St Catherine, St Stephen, St Martin, and St Paul. M. R. James and E. W. Tristram suggested the governing theme of Virgin, Martyrs, Saints, Confessors (ie. a Litany): this is accurate, but there is no easy explanation for why some saints ‘made the cut’ and others were excluded, nor the order in which they are represented, which does not correspond exactly with the Litany nor any festal calendar, local or otherwise, as James recognised.\(^{187}\) Generally speaking, however, the ‘medley’ is not often given its due recognition as a common medieval organizational principle: this walk might simply be read as a ‘medley’ of popular saints.\(^{188}\)

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\(^{186}\) E. W. Tristram, in Cranage and Tristram 1938, 4–5.

\(^{187}\) James 1908, 3–4; Cranage and Tristram 1938, 5.

\(^{188}\) On this principle see Wharton 1994, 14–20; Binski 1999, 17.
The keystones of the inner wall arches, the installation of which was a necessary structural precondition for the rest of the vaulting, are best thought of as a group in their own right, though not one with much discernible pattern. The figures tend to be stocky and characterful (eg. NJ0) and some scenes are marginally more crudely cut than others. They show a range of episodes of saints’ lives, including three related scenes of the Life of St Edmund (bays G-I); also some ornamental scenes (NC0 – pear tree with owl and mouse; NE0 – four grotesque heads), and one scene of David killing a lion (NF0).

West walk, bays D-L.

‘… And from the entrance to the hall of the guest house to the entrance to the church with the same entrance and in respect of the wall against the aforesaid hall and the vaulting, this was done through the executors of Lord John Wakering, former Bishop of Norwich.’

Vaulting of the remaining bays of the west walk presumably began after Bishop Wakering’s death, in 1425, which is commemorated in the inner keystone of the final bay of the walk (WL0). John Horn was employed for 15 weeks in 1427-8 (a gravour, paid by the week), along with William Reppys (also a gravour, who was paid by the stone for 6 keystones at 6s 8d each):¹⁸⁹ it seems that they were cutting the west walk bosses (bays D-L). These nine bays, from the door to the great hall to the door of the church, are the only ones with fifteenth-century columns and capitals – another piece of evidence for their being the last completed.¹⁹⁰

The keystones of the inner wall arches, whilst roughly contemporary, must predate the main vault (if only marginally), and are somewhat separate, a self-sufficient group which does not interact with the main vault iconographically. Their figures are rendered in the same stocky, characterful manner as their counterparts in the north walk (compare

¹⁸⁹ Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 43, citing Roll 1077.
¹⁹⁰ Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 43.
WH0 and NI0. The wonderful distortion of the vaulted canopy in WH0 is much like that in NB4, and perhaps by the same hand. Iconographically speaking, they show a sequence of saints’ episodes: four scenes from the Life of St Basil (bays D-G), three from the Christian of Constantinople (bays H-J), and two from the legend of St Christopher (K-L).

Choice of scenes in west bays D-L.

All the bosses of the main vault in west bays D-L are taken by with the completion of the Apocalypse cycle: unlike the earlier Apocalypse bays (SA – WC), all junctions of the vault ribs in bays D-L are given over to the task, leaving no room for foliate or jongleuric subsidiaries. This creates a somewhat paradoxical situation in which the narrative is at once represented more extensively than in previous bays, with more bosses given to each verse/chapter, but is also curtailed, lacking the room to represent the final chapters (Rev. 1. 21-22). A more redacted rendering of chapters 15-20 would have left room for the narrative to be drawn to a close.

The more extensive rendering of the Apocalypse narrative required the invention of many minor scenes, and it therefore represents a significant departure from the manuscript model which may have been used previously. Of the 54 Apocalypse bosses that adorn these 9 bays only 13 scenes are illustrated in Selden Supra 38. Even where the scenes do have illuminated equivalents, the bosses in these bays tend to differ greatly, and are generally more elaborate than their manuscript counterparts. Where scenes are invented, they tend to be elaborations of the key central scene: bosses WD3 and WD5, for example, elaborate the theme of WD4 (and even interact across the space: figures from WD3 look on to WD4 in adoration); WE5 and WD6 elaborate WE4. There are many instances of this kind of interdependence: W13 and W15, for example, only make sense interpreted as a pair. There is an iconographical oddity in the inclusion of the Coronation of the Virgin in WL6, but this is perhaps an inventive interpretation of Rev.1 21:22, offering an abrupt conclusion to the curtailed narrative.
Stylistically speaking, these bosses display the same sort of confident spatial manipulation developed in the north walk. There are some striking similarities of workmanship between west and north walk bosses: compare, for example, the merchant’s table in WI5 with the tables at Herod’s feast boss [NG4; Model X; Fig.106]. The west walk bosses tend to be even more elaborate in their organicism and deep undercutting – see WK3, WL4. And there are striking passages of detail: see the rosary beads in WG3, and the hail-stones which seem to float in the air in WG2. The narrative complexity of these scenes create challenges for the boss cutter, but the craftsmen seem to have relished the complexity, often including more figures than necessary and distorting them skilfully to create the impression of a succession of spherical growths along the vault. The spatial devices will be discussed in more detail below.

Completion of works

‘… Thus was completed the work of the most famous cloister in the year of the lord 1430, in the time of Lord William Alnewyk, bishop of Norwich, and in the third year of Lord William Wursted prior of the same church. The time from the beginning of the work up to the end was 133 years.’

The entry in the communar and pitancer rolls for the levelling of earth in the garth in 1430-1 confirms this date as the terminus ante quem for the cloister works. After this date only minor alterations occur, such as the addition of glazed upper windows in 1437-8, the construction of the present lavers and their arches in 1443-4, and the repaving of the walks in 1450-3.191

1430-1, therefore, saw the completion of a series of campaigns which altogether spanned 130 years. Considering the works as a whole, it seems that, as in the preceding works in the east and south walks, the development of the sculpture is best

191 Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 43.
characterized as iterative, experimental, shaped by *ad hoc* decision-making. The finished cloister may seem cohesive to the modern eye, but closer inspection reveals that the iconographical plan, and the way this was distributed across the vaults, changed with each individual building campaign, as did the sculptural idiom. When works began in 1297 it is likely that nothing more complicated than a series of foliate bosses was envisaged: in subsequent years this would evolve to include jongleuriç ornament, biblical elements, a grand Apocalypse cycle, and multiple hagiographic schemes. This notion of an iterative, evolving sculptural programme should be seen as a challenge to suggestions that the cloister iconography was conceived holistically as a response to any particular stimulus: rather, each team of builders and sculptors imagined a fresh solution to the problem of how best to decorate a cloister vault, finding room for invention and elaboration within the parameters established by their forebears.\(^{192}\) Throughout this many-staged development, the *gravours* responsible for the bosses developed an increasingly elaborate palate of sculptural conceits. These are discussed below.

2.2 Preliminary stylistic parsing of the 1411-1430 bosses

The bosses of the north and west walks feature bravura displays of spatial gamesmanship, cramming crowds of figures and architectural features into the conventional rounded hemisphere of the boss shape. This section comprises a ‘parsing’ of the different spatial tricks which these late bosses employ. I am not primarily concerned to distinguish between styles in terms of ‘separate hands at work’ (though I make observations on this where possible); instead I am concerned with the ‘styles of spatial manipulation’, and the different devices which constitute this style. I discuss these devices separately to try to help us see better, but they are not independent phenomena – the inconsistent rending of space means necessarily that movement is

\(^{192}\) This challenges Sekules’ notion of the bosses as a response riots or heresy (Sekules 2006, 296–301) and Binski’s idea of a ‘general plan for the bosses as a whole formulated by Salmon and his team, and adhered to until the fifteenth-century completion’ (Binski 2014a, 112).
required to see each of the various sub-scenes, and it also requires the bending of straight lines, for example. These various effects are all interdependent parts of a grammar of spatial malleability.

In Part 3 of this thesis I will discuss the possibility of finding authentic, period concepts for describing these effects. Here, however, my intention is to describe these bosses’ distinctive formal characteristics for a modern audience: this necessitates a rather freer, more a-historical use of terms (such as ‘space’, ‘foreshortening’, ‘warping’, ‘axes’, ‘distortion’) than would be desirable in a historicist reading.

**Inconsistent rendering of space**

It is a commonplace tactic in many non-perspectival traditions of representation to render things with their ‘conceptually’ or ‘optically prominent’ face parallel to the picture plane: this is sometimes called ‘parallel-plane representation’. The disagreement of the different planes represented appears inconsistent to an immobile spectator schooled in linear perspective. Yet this is a hallmark of much medieval representation in two-dimensions; we find it employed in a number of passages in the bosses, too, where the use of low relief textures encourages a rather ‘linear’ sort of representation.

[Fig.92] In these two representations of tables we find the tables themselves, and the plates and knives which lie on them, rendered broadly in ‘plan’ view, whilst the chalices or cups are represented in elevation. This is presumably because the individual objects have been represented from their most characteristic angles rather than subjected to a governing system of projection.

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Variable pictorial axes

A related phenomenon occurs on a grander scale, in deeper relief, when the boss carvers represent groups of figures or objects from different angles to those neighboring them (ie. with different ‘planes’ perpendicular to the angle of our gaze).

See, for example, [Fig.93] where the ‘underside’ of Christ’s robe and feet as he ascends are represented (in real terms) nearly perpendicular to (rather than parallel to) the upward line of the mound from which he ascends. Similarly, [Fig.94], Laurence, who lies flat on his griddle, is shown parallel to the judge and his attendants. This likewise represents a 90-degree rotation of the axis of the scene: Laurence’s ‘left-right’ axis is, in real terms, parallel to the judge’s ‘up-down’ axis. If we were to draw a line through the digital model of the scene representing the pull of gravity earthwards, we would find this line having to bend 90 degrees. If the viewer takes up a fixed position below the boss, they look up and see contradictory planes of the different elements of the scene: Laurence is represented in ‘conceptually prominent’ plan view, whilst his judge appears in ‘conceptually prominent’ elevation.194

Paradoxically, however, whereas in the case of the low-relief elements on the table (plate, cup) this juxtaposition of views represented the lack of any consistent projection scheme, these grander juxtapositions are in fact often explicable in terms of the bosses’ spatial logic. Many of the north and west bosses share a common approach to sculptural space: they seem, with varying degrees of consistency, to ‘wrap’ a slice of reasonably consistent pictorial space around the convex surface of the boss. It is as if the elements of the scene have been conceived in an imagined, isotropic (consistent) tranche of space that has then been warped, its ends set at 180 degrees to each other. In some cases this

194 Further examples: [Fig.95] Dormition of the Virgin – the Virgin lies in the same plane as the kneeling figure beside her; [Fig.96] merchants looking up into the vault and down onto a table at the same time. For an MS version of the same inconsistency, see British Library, Yates Thompson 13. For a sculptural antecedent, see the Lawrence capital at Moissac, illustrated in Schapiro 1993b, 49 fig.51.
warping happens in a consistent curve; in others (such as Laurence’s griddling) there are more abrupt junctions between pockets of space with different axes, but the net result is the same: this broadly consistent ‘warping’ of space ensures that, at any point over the boss’s surface, the pictorial up-down axis is in the same relation to the boss’ surface.

Sometimes, however, we find a mixture of approaches: in the boss of Christ appearing at the table [boss NB7; Model III], we not only find a mixture of high and low relief projection, but also of consistent and inconsistent approaches to spatial mapping. The apostles on Christ’s side of the table, compared to the table itself, might seem to present a consistent ‘rolling’ or ‘warping’ of spatial axes, but when we consider the other rank of apostles, pressed up against the table, we find there is no consistency in the choice of viewpoint. More likely, the ‘plan’ view has been chosen for the table because of its conceptual prominence, whilst both ranks of apostles are shown in a more legible elevation. In more complex bosses, such as Herod’s feast [boss NG4; Model X; Figs.104-107], we find these techniques used in free combination. There is a general ‘warping’ of axes across the surface of the boss, but also the inclusion of other elements, small and large, shown from their most characteristic angles.

**Foreshortening**

The term ‘foreshortening’ is anachronistic, a seventeenth-century term reflecting perspectival understanding (although in some senses all representation in two dimensions, or in relief, requires a kind of ‘forshortening’: this is the root of the inherent spatial ambiguity of all images).\(^{195}\) Here I use the term to mean the partial or total collapsing of an imagined object in one or two dimensions, whilst its other dimension(s) are retained, yielding an illusion of extension into fictive space if the beholder participates imaginatively.

\(^{195}\) Gombrich 2009, 210–11.
It is rare for the bosses employ straightforward ‘foreshortening’ of objects, but some instances exist: see the coffin containing manna in NE2. The coffin is compressed front-to-back, but it maintains an illusion of depth thanks to its trapezoidal opening [Model IV; Figs.97,101]. A similar effect occurs in NB4 [Model III], where the curved, trapezoidal form of the table at which Christ breaks bread gives an illusion of greater depth.

*Single scenes require movement to be read*

We have already established that it is a standard operation in many bosses to ‘warp’ a scene across a curving hemisphere. From a single fixed viewpoint, a viewer can get the impression that multiple contradictory points of view are juxtaposed: some elements of the scene are shown as if from above, others as if from the side. Some bosses perform this ‘warping’ function to such an extent that the different constituent parts of a scene cease to be visible from a single viewpoint: instead, the viewer finds they must move around the boss, inspecting the different segments of its surface, and piecing together the different constituent elements of the narrative in the mind’s eye.

One such boss is SL6, the ‘Windmill’ boss [Model IX]. The scene is unidentifiable, but comprises a number of distinct elements: a horse rider carrying a sack [Fig.98] approaches a windmill is set in a landscape; a miller waits at the mill to meet the rider [Fig.99]. Stock is visible in a neighbouring field and a miller (perhaps the same miller?) carries a large sack into an outbuilding [Fig.100]. Each of these elements – windmill, blades, foliage, fields, rider - are curved around the boss surface, utilizing even the interstitial spaces up between the vault ribs. Because of the curvature these sub-scenes are mutually exclusive: if we are viewing the one scene, the others are largely hidden from us. Each oblique viewpoint offers something new of interest; no single viewpoint will suffice.
This boss was carved in 1415-16 and is the earliest example of this dramatic distortion. It builds on the idiomatic curvature developed in the south walk (SI6, SH1, SH2) but develops it further, with more exaggerated convexity and some passages of virtuosic undercutting. Similar characteristics can be observed in nearby bosses WC4 and WB7, as well as NA0, which might be by the same hand.

A number of later bosses in the north walk then exploit these mutually exclusive views for theatrical effect, arguably playing with this gradual revelation of a scene. The Assumption of St John capitalizes on the viewer’s shifting perspective, placing the figure of John lifted by angels on the opposite curve of the boss to the coffin full of manna which he leaves behind [boss NE2; Model IV; Fig.97,101]. Neither element is properly appreciable from below: John’s ascending body greets the approaching viewer; looking back at the boss having passed below it, the manna he leaves behind becomes a new focal point, with John obscured (as the Golden Legend puts it, ‘lost to human sight’). The narrative therefore reveals itself as we walk underneath it, and we share in the surprise of John’s disciples when discovering the coffin full of manna.

Jules Lubbock has written of how the placement of different characters within sculptural programmes can encourage the movement of the eye or (more importantly) the feet, guiding the observer around a sculptural object. Only a few of our bosses, however, seem to use this shift of viewpoint for an explicit narrative effect: in many cases, it seems the sculptor simply enjoys spreading his scene across the mutually exclusive faces of the block. It is common for bosses to present an interesting or

196 The ‘gangplank’ up to the windmill, for example, floats free of the main mass of the block: see Model IX.
197 For the story see de Voragine 2012, 50–56.
198 de Voragine 2012, 50–56.
200 For example, Martyrdom of St Clement, NF6.
pleasing aspect to an oblique viewer as they approach down the cloister, which only resolves into a legible scene from below.\textsuperscript{201}

\textit{Multiple sub-scenes require movement}

Some bosses include multiple ‘sub scenes’ within a single narrative. This is a common narrative device across visual media of the time, but the distinctive feature in this case is the way the different narrative scenes are positioned around the hemisphere of the boss, shifting in and out of focus as the viewer moves.\textsuperscript{202}

The Supper at Emmaus boss is one example of this effect [boss NB4; Model V; Fig.102]. There are three ‘sub-scenes’ in the narrative: Christ and the Apostles arrive at the house (Luke 24: 13-28); Christ is recognized in breaking the bread (Luke 24: 30); Christ ‘disappears’ (Luke 24: 31).\textsuperscript{203} Seated on the stone benches on the inner wall of the cloister, the viewer sees Christ meeting two disciples on the road to Emmaus; Christ carries a pilgrim’s bag, showing that he is not recognized. By standing and moving to a position more centrally below the boss, the viewer can shift their focus to the central episode, of Christ being recognised at the dinner table. Then the viewer notices the hem of Christ’s robe as he disappears, and, looking back from further down the walk, they might notice the angels in the clouds above, tucked up against the vault rib [Fig.103]. These sub-scenes are not entirely mutually exclusive – we can find a single position from which all are just about ‘visible’ - but the best view of each is attained from a different point.

\textsuperscript{201} Attempts by Roberta Gilchrist and others to deduce from the axial orientation of the bosses likely processional routes through the cloister seem to me to be misguided: Gilchrist 2005, 88; see my discussion in Chapter 6, p.155.
\textsuperscript{202} Ringbom 1980, 55.
\textsuperscript{203} The hem of his robe is just visible. M. D. Anderson discussed this scene briefly when considering local mystery plays (Anderson 1964, 150–51) and argued its composition to be a carbon copy of contemporary staging practice: this is typical of the tendency to assume the bosses are derivative of some existing source, rather than original conceptions in their own right in response to the particular challenges of the medium.
This same orbital spectatorship is encouraged in Herod’s feast [boss NG4; Model X; Figs.104-107]. The narrative follows the synoptic gospels (Matthew 14:1-12; Mark 6:14-27; Luke 9:9). Herod and Herodias’ craned-back heads greet an approaching viewer, sitting at a banqueting table [Fig.105]. In front of them, Salome dances (Matthew 14: 6-7); this is best viewed from below. The table of dinner guests (Matthew 14:9), on the fringe of the boss below Salome, show the viewer why it was that Herod had to keep his promise: to see this clearly, we have to move again [Fig.106]. Then, circling around the fringe, we see John praying while his executioner raises a sword (Matthew 14:10); moving back towards the centre, we see Salome presenting the severed head on a salver (Matthew 14:11) [Fig.107]. A number of ‘extras’ - guests, cajoling demons, a monkey - populate the crevices between these main scenes. Again, we can tolerably get the ‘gist’ of the scene from a single viewpoint, but its curvature does encourage perambulations, bringing its many little vignettes into clearer focus.

*Curves are of course, a consequence of the general strategy of ‘warping’ space across the boss’ hemisphere, but it is worthy of note that, rather than avoiding architectonic and cuboidal forms (so as not to draw attention to the ‘warping’), the boss carvers seem to delight in the rendering of straight lines as curves.*

Returning to NB4, the Supper at Emmaus, we notice the delicately warped architectural elements [Model V; Fig.102]. The swelling, bulging effect, developed almost a century earlier in bosses such as SI6, is brought to its maturation. Both the vertical and horizontal lines of the building become arcs on the boss surface. The overall effect is rather like a fish eye lens - the difficulty of making this kind of comparison, and the notion of curvilinear perspective generally, will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Other examples of a similar effect occur in WC4, the harvest of the earth; NA0, the foundation of the monastery [Fig.108]; and NC1, in which John is showed the heavenly
city. In each of these cases the buildings in question are rendered in very low relief, and
are curved as if they are paper cut-outs pasted across the bosses’ surface. The approach
here is more painterly than sculptural, and is created by the unusual interaction between
projection in two dimensions and a three-dimensional support. The carver does not
avoid the strange distortion of the curving spire in WC4, but revels in the effect. NB7 is
another good example of this: the surface of the table appears to be a regular oblong
when viewed from below, but moving further away from the boss the viewer comes to
see that both this table and the bench on which the disciples sit are radically curved
[Model III].

A more complex instance of the same effect can be found in the depiction of the Burial
of St Thomas [boss NH7; Model V; Figs.109,110]. From directly below the sarcophagus
appears to be a regular cuboid, but from oblique angles its drastic distortion is evident.
We sense that the carver is pursuing multiple, contradictory effects: on the one hand, he
takes pleasure in the fact that this radical curvature can go unnoticed from some angles;
on the other, he enjoys the radical curvature from oblique angles for its own abstract
beauty. Unlike the disciples’ bench in NB7 [Model III], which is essentially a linear detail
rendered as a linear curve, the sarcophagus here is emphatically three-dimensional: the
stretching of its rectilinear planes results in complex shapes with compound curved
planes.

Splayed forms

Alongside this general readiness to represent lines and cuboids as curves, we also find
some instances where a more complex transformation has taken place: where forms
have been ‘splayed’ slightly, and appear to spread outwards where we might otherwise
expect them to recede from the viewer.

204 A late Romanesque English antecedent to this can be found in the curvature of the
table in the Last Supper relief on the font at St Nicholas, Brighton, Sussex.
In perspectival representation parallel lines are expected to converge as they recede.\textsuperscript{205} In ‘reverse’ perspective (or ‘inverted’ perspective), however, they diverge, and as a consequence multiple planes of some solids become visible from the same fixed point.\textsuperscript{206} I delay my discussion of the philosophical problems surrounding ‘reverse’ perspective until Chapter 7; it is noteworthy, however, that there is no critical literature which applies these questions to sculpture.\textsuperscript{207} Yet just as much relief sculpture in the Western canon incorporates ‘foreshortening’ and forced perspective, so sculpture can also incorporate ‘fore-largening’ or ‘fore-lengthening’ (to coin clumsy terms), ‘splaying’ objects outwards where they ought to diminish, enabling the viewer to ‘see more’ than they otherwise could from a fixed point.

The casket in NH7 exhibits this effect, if only slightly. As well as being curved, close examination reveals it to be wider (in real terms) at the base than on its top. The sides of the sarcophagus diverge, rather than remaining parallel (as in ‘real’ objects) or converging (as in ‘forced perspective’). As one moves around the boss, this divergence of supposedly parallel planes gives an impression of much greater three-dimensionality than a ‘correct’ representation of the same objects (with parallel sides) might: moving away from a ‘central’ view directly below the boss, the viewer is quickly confronted with a side-on view of the casket, which in fact they would have had to have travelled much further to achieve had the objects’ sides been carved parallel.

Other examples exist: the buildings which constitute Babylon, WI4, are ‘splayed’, the angles created at the junctions of their planes are often greater than 90 degrees. A small side table in the ‘Vision of St Edward at Mass’, NG3, combines a slight ‘forcing’ of perspective with an even slighter widening towards its base. The wells depicted in WE4, similarly, ‘splay’ outwards – their tops are tipped upwards towards the viewer, meaning

\textsuperscript{205} For the basic system see Panofsky 1997, 28–29.
\textsuperscript{206} Antonova 2016, 29–30.
\textsuperscript{207} See, however, John White’s speculations regarding the place of sculpture in developing Attic techniques of foreshortening: White 1987, 236–48.
that their top and base are visible almost simultaneously. In each of these cases, the very slight splaying serves to enhance an impression of three dimensionality; it reverses the effects of foreshortening (which means a viewer sees less than the whole object), and ensures that only a slight adjustment of the viewer’s position is required to yield the impression of a whole different viewpoint on the depicted object.

**Figure and frame**

In most of the bosses, a combination of the above approaches is employed together, with the resulting effect that each scene produces a pleasing round mass. Whether the pursuit of this hemispherical effect drives the adoption of these effects, or whether the effects combine to create the hemispherical shape of the block, is rather a chicken-and-egg problem. Nevertheless, these bosses’ most striking formal feature is the way in which an organic jumble of parts comes together to produce a near-perfectly rounded mass. Many bosses could serve to exemplify this; we could cite NB4, NB7, NF6, NG2 for instances. A great deal of their formal appeal comes from the tension between the organic freedom of the constituent parts and the way they are subjected to the rule of an implied frame.

This is as evident in the small, simple subsidiary compositions as in the large busy ones. We can see, for example, how a limited number of figures in WG3, NF3, or NG3 are nonetheless curved together to constitute a sphere, each figure bending as if supple. In the large compositions, such as WL4, NG4, each figure is not so distorted, but they combine in an almost pointillist manner to create a visual whole in which forms press against the frame that contains them.

The best descriptions of this phenomenon in other sculpture occur in the work of formalist-minded art historians Meyer Schapiro and Henri Focillon. Focillon drew a

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208 Schapiro 2006, 33 ff; Focillon 1989, 42–110 passim. See also Baltrušaitis 1986; cited in Schapiro 1993a: Baltrušaitis’ thesis is that Romanesque form is determined by the
distinction between those sculptures which treat space around them as an environment to be expanded into, and those which (like the bosses) treat space around them as a limit, not to be transgressed: in the latter case ‘space more or less weighs on form and rigorously confines its expansion; at the same time that form presses against space as the palm of the hand does on a table or against a sheet of glass.’

For both historians, Romanesque sculpture was the *locus classicus* of this effect: monsters ‘are shackled permanently to an architectural and ornamental definition’, each ‘fettered’ to an ‘abstract armature’. For Schapiro, nothing expressed this tension better than the Souillac trumeau: animals contained within the trumeau’s outline possess ‘general freedom with respect to the boundary’, whilst the boundary, an ‘accepted constraint’, gives the figures their pattern and rhythm.

This tension between the conventional frame and the objects contorted within it is, according to Schapiro, mutually energizing. Forms and frames exchange properties: ‘the human figure loses its organic character in becoming a column, the column acquires organic character and properties of movement… there has been a sort of exchange between the human and the inorganic’. This exchange is suggestive of movement: following Focillon, Schapiro saw the organic shapes within the frame as implying limitless other permutations; the fixed form of the sculpture suggested other possible forms. In the tympanum at Beaulieu he observed ‘a most extraordinary example of the deforming of a figure in fitting it to the particular curve of the architecture’ … ‘the adaptation is not in terms of a fixed, static system which precedes and transcends the whole work, but is rather part of an action’.

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union of two agonistic elements – the objects given by the ‘content’, with their own natural shapes, and an antecedent geometric schema.

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209 Focillon 1989, 78–79. He terms this principle the ‘*loi du cadre*’.
210 Focillon 1989, 42. Focillon also noted, as a general principle, the similarity between the Romanesque sensibility and character of much late-medieval sculpture.
211 Schapiro 2006, 91.
212 Schapiro 2006, 89.
For Schapiro, this device was at once trans-historical in its appeal and also rooted in the specific conditions of the Romanesque. On the one hand, he saw this ‘spontaneous tendency toward fitting and conformation’ as inherently and universally humorous: the illuminated letter ‘Q’ formed by two Cistercians [Fig.111] is a ‘sort of pun for the eye’, ‘a formal play, which is like the acrobat’s self-deformation which …. has always been a matter of joy’ [my emphasis]. On the other, Schapiro (as Burkhardt before him) saw this conceit as an allegory for, or even a symptom of, the historical relationship between individual and institution in medieval society: just as individuals were free within constraining societal pressures, so were the sculptures they produced free within bounds. I do not wish to endorse these allegorizing arguments, but do wish to uphold Schapiro and Focillon’s formal description of the sculptural conceit as a source of delight. Focillon was in any case less prepared to speculate on grand correlations between culture and art, and instead saw this sculptural quality as product of a certain approach to carving: there are, he wrote, ‘two kinds of working procedure in sculpture…. one which, starting from the surface, seeks for the form within the block, and one which, starting from the inner armature, builds it up gradually until the form is fully revealed’. The Norwich bosses are products of the former method: I return to this observation in Chapter 4 when I consider the carving processes employed in their manufacture.

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214 Schapiro 2006, 93–94. For the same effect see also the fifteenth-century letter-contortions in the ‘Macclesfield Alphabet Book’, British Library, MS. 88887, f.15r-20v; or Bodleian MS. Ashmole 1504, f.45v, both in the tradition of the Flemish ‘grotesque alphabet’ (see Dürer’s ‘grotesque alphabet’ of 1464). For more examples of this bending effect see Kwakkel 2015. There are slight local resonances to be found, in the roundels of Losinga’s reliquary chapel: see pl.IV in I. Atherton, Fernie, and Harper-Bill 1996a.

215 Schapiro 2006, 34.

216 Focillon 1989, 110. For discussion of the former method in Michaelangelo’s ouvre, see Carabell 1997, 93; De Tolnay 1969.
Conclusion

Despite all the irregularities and distortions, there is a certain logic to the way the bosses approach the problem of representation on a convex surface in relief. We do not feel, as Gombrich says of some illusionistic prints, that this is a world ‘where terms such as ‘up’ and ‘down’ and ‘right’ and ‘left’ have lost their meaning.’ And yet, the spatial characteristics of the bosses do escape comprehensive definition: it is difficult, and perhaps misleading, to undertake a systematic analysis of objects which are not systematic in their approach to representation. Some common elements can be identified, but these linguistic building blocks are interwoven freely, erratically, with lots of contradictions and irregularities. Just when we think we have diagnosed a ‘rule’ for the bosses’ treatment of space, we find a boss which breaks this rule, or modifies it to agree with some other effect. To go beyond these formalistic observations it will be necessary to investigate the techniques of production employed by the boss carvers: is it productive to see the bosses as ‘distortions’ or derivatives of a 2D model? Would their carvers have worked from 2D sources to produce a 3D product? Or ought we to imagine a working method where forms and compositions are worked out directly in 3D? These questions are taken up in Chapter 4. First, however, I will show in Chapter 3 how the spatial idiom of these late bosses was being taken up elsewhere in Norfolk in the decades following the cloisters’ completion.

217 Gombrich 2009, 207.
Chapter 3  Diffusion: the spread of this sculptural idiom in Norfolk bosses

Having ‘parsed’ and described this distinctive idiom in the context of the cloister in the previous chapter, this chapter now ‘zooms out’, drawing together a group of East Anglian bosses, all carved in the fifteenth century, which resemble the cloister bosses in their curvature and spatial distortion. Some may have been produced by the same masons; others respond directly or indirectly to the tradition of hemispherical carving established in the cloister.

Norwich Cathedral itself became something of a centre of boss carving following the completion of the cloister, with major sequences being produced for the nave, transepts, presbytery, and Bauchun chapel. These boss cycles are discussed in existing literature, though there has been little attempt to reflect more broadly on the sculptural traditions connecting each of the projects.\(^{218}\) I discuss the nave, presbytery and transept cycles only briefly, however: this is partly in order to focus on the lesser known and largely unpublished local tradition of porch bosses, but also because my focus is on bosses which mimic the cloister’s hemispherical, distortive idiom, and other bosses (such as those at St Helen’s Church) do this more emphatically than the better-known bosses of the nave.

3.1  Porches

A number of Norfolk parish churches were extended in the early/mid-fifteenth century to receive Perpendicular porches, the low vaults of which invited bosses. The fashion for porch-building seems mainly to have boomed after 1430.\(^{219}\) There are, however, examples with bosses before this date. At St Mary, Worstead there is a very interesting single boss in the north porch from c.1400, depicting the Coronation of the Virgin

\(^{218}\) Principally James 1908; Rose 1997; Rose 1996.
\(^{219}\) For the statistics see Pevsner and Wilson 1999, 2:60; Lunnon 2012 is the authoritative survey of Norfolk porch building.
[Fig.112], with pronounced warping of architecture and hemispherical swelling.\textsuperscript{220} The important porch at St Nicholas King’s Lynn, constructed in 1419, hosts a lavish lierne vault with (sculpturally rather plain) bosses.\textsuperscript{221} Another noteworthy early fifteenth-century porch, with a good set of (rather plain) bosses also exists at St John Baptist, Peterborough.

At St Margaret Cley-next-the-sea there is a south porch with bosses built c.1414. This has sometimes been seen as part of this Ramsey/Dec campaign, but it was in fact a later addition, built c.1414 under the patronage of Lady Beatrice Stafford.\textsuperscript{222} The vaulting is a tierceron star, and the bosses are a mix of genre and biblical. One shows a woman chasing a fox; another shows a man’s bottom being beaten [Fig.113]; there are winged beasts and angels holding scrolls; there is a Virgin in Glory/Assumption, in a similar manner to the near-contemporaneous example at Walpole St Peter (below).

At St Peter’s, Walpole St Peter there is a boss of the Assumption of the Virgin in a large and elaborate south porch built c.1435 [Fig.114].\textsuperscript{223} There is also a Christ in Judgement boss which is wonderfully spherical, with a curvaceous three-dimensional hell-mouth offering oblique interest [Fig.115]. This strongly recalls the Norwich idiom; there are few precedents elsewhere which resemble it. Other bosses of good and evil subjects (horse with bit; wild boar; pelican in her piety) are similarly circular. There are also interesting bosses in a passageway created when the chancel was extended over a walkway in the fifteenth century.

\textsuperscript{220} Nichols 2002, 106; no documentary evidence of patronage survives to aid dating.
\textsuperscript{221} Lunnon 2012, 112.
\textsuperscript{222} The notion of a fourteenth-century date begins in A. B. Whittingham 1980; it is repeated by Binski 2014a, 108. For the later date see Pevsner and Wilson 1998, 433; Nichols 2002, 103; and for the suggestion of Stafford see Lunnon 2012, 113, 152. The porch encloses the earlier Ramsey Decorated doorway, cusped and sub-cusped ogee arch, and the hoodmolding with lion’s head stops.
\textsuperscript{223} Nichols 2002, 103.
The ‘Five Joys’ group

A more unified group of mid fifteenth-century porches can be identified which all feature formally inventive, hemispherical bosses in the sculptural idiom of the Norwich. These are at Wymondham Abbey, St Remigius Hethersett, St Mary’s Denton, St Mary’s Attleborough, and perhaps St Mary’s Yaxley; I deal with each of these in turn below following some general remarks. The more extended boss scheme in the chantry at St Helen’s Church in the Great Hospital at Norwich borrows its sculptural formulae from the Wymondham group and exaggerates them; it is the crowning glory of this group, and indeed the epitome of the Norwich cloister idiom, and I deal with it separately in the next section.

The porches all employ variations on the sequence of narrative episodes – Annunciation, Nativity, Resurrection, Ascension, Coronation - known as the Five Joys of the Virgin. Six porches feature all five ‘Joys’ (these are Wymondham, Hethersett, Denton, Attleborough, Hemsby, Cley) and of these only two (Hemsby and Cley) do not have the either the Coronation (Cley) or the Assumption (Hemsby) positioned centrally. There are other porches where only one ‘Joy’ features (Lynn St Nicholas, North Elmham, Salle, Walpole St Peter, Worstead) but whether these lone scenes can be thought of as ‘Joys’ is debatable. In other ‘Joys’ sequences, notably wall paintings (such as those at Seething, Norfolk, late fourteenth-century) and alabaster altarpieces, it is the Resurrection, not the Assumption/Coronation, which is placed centrally; in that arrangement the emphasis is Christological, whereas in the boss sequences in porches it is on the centrally-placed Virgin. Other sculptural instances of the ‘Joys’ iconography

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224 St Mary’s Hemsby hosts bosses which are iconographically related to this group but stylistically rather different.
225 Nichols 2002, 68.
226 Nichols 2002, 2; Lunnon 2012, 132; for Seething see Tristram 1950, 338.
in Norfolk occur on the Bolfield font, in the Norwich Cathedral nave bosses, bay H, M, J, K, L, c.1450-1475, and in bosses in wood at Salle, c.1450.227

In literary instances of the ‘Five Joys’ each narrative episode sometimes becomes a ‘small but moving unit for meditation’ – likewise, the bosses can be seen as sculptural ‘meditations’ on these narrative episodes.228 It is significant that many of the parish churches in question have Marian dedications; Helen Lunnon has also suggested that there was potential resonance between Coronation/marriage iconography and the porch setting, since late-Medieval marriages often took place in the porch.229

The Coronation of the Virgin by the Trinity, which appears at Wymondham, Worstead, in the Norwich cloister, and in the cathedral’s Bauchun chapel, is an interesting piece of iconography in itself: it began to be used in Europe around 1400, and may have come to England from Flemish sources.230 The most common image of the glorification of the Virgin is her Assumption: the Coronation, especially by the Trinity, is unusual, but would have been most visible in England at this date in alabaster altarpieces of the Life of the Virgin.231 A relevant precedent for the configuration we find in the Norfolk bosses can be found in the Hours of Elizabeth the Queen produced in England c.1420-1430: here, significantly, the miniature is placed at the beginning of a sequence of the Joys of the Virgin.232 These bosses, then, sometimes employed unusual and very modern iconography.

228 For the literary tradition see Woolf 1968, 137.
229 Lunnon 2012, 52–53.
230 Morgan 1992, 225–26. The earliest instance of the iconography in England appears to be the Missal for Carmelite Friars (British Library Add. MS. 29704), c.1390s, though the exact configuration is very untypical. It also features in the Worcester cloister: this example shows three persons of the Trinity standing, not seated.
The porches provide viewing conditions not unlike those in the cloister, since they are necessarily thoroughfares which create different viewing angles as the viewer approaches, passes beneath, and then leaves behind, the bosses. The vaults tend to be low; it was also common for there to be permanent benches built into the porch, creating opportunities to sit and look (as in the cloister).\(^{233}\) As a group of building projects these ‘Joys’ porches are remarkably lavish: stone vaulting was uncommon in Norfolk parish church architecture of this period, with only the nave at Blakeney, the chantry at St Helens, and a number of church tower bases being so treated.\(^{234}\) Although by c.1450 some church porches, such as the group in question, had achieved a remarkable level of sophistication, others remained relatively plain. These figural boss sequences, then, are extravagances in an already extravagant genre.

\[Wymondham\text{ }Abbey\text{ }\&\text{ }Church\text{ }of\text{ }St\text{ }Mary\text{ }and\text{ }St\text{ }Thomas\text{ }of\text{ }Canterbury\text{ }[Figs.116-121]\]

Wymondham was originally a Benedictine Priory of the twelfth century, dependant on the Abbey of St Albans; the building was shared between the monks and the parish. The monks occupied the chancel, east tower, and south aisles, while the parish governed the north aisle, the nave, and west towers, as at St Albans. Various modifications to aisles, crossing tower, and west towers occurred in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, concluding with the addition of the north porch in around c.1430-40 and the new west tower c.1440.\(^{235}\)

The porch is rather superficially tacked on (string courses at the porch’s eastern end do not interconnect), but its architectural features are of good quality: windows and doorways are moulded in Ancaster stone. The knapped flint staircase which leads up to the parviso is similar in its styling to the work on the tower base, which was begun in the late 1440s. The porch is vaulted with a stone tierceron vault, and there are five

\(^{233}\) Lunnon 2012, 92.  
\(^{234}\) Lunnon 2012, 91.  
\(^{235}\) Cattermole 2007, 93.
historiated bosses at the rib junctions: they are the Coronation (central), Annunciation and Nativity (north and south), Resurrection and Ascension (west and east). We might see two axes, a N-S Marian axis and an E-W Christological axis. Nichols offers c.1450 as a plausible date for the bosses, at slight variance with Cattermole.\textsuperscript{236} The Coronation of the Virgin by the Trinity is iconographically noteworthy, as has been discussed; it resembles that in the Norwich cloister in its grand architectural thrones and their distortion. The format of the Ascension is also much like the cloister example, albeit slightly simplified. The Resurrection is distinctive, with a flattened, trapezoidal tomb. As a whole, the bosses are very delicately cut, recalling the fussier compositions of the cloister’s west walk. On the porch’s exterior there is a sculpted Annunciation split across the spandrels.\textsuperscript{237}

The stylistic resemblance between the Wymondham porch bosses and the work in the Norwich cloister is made more interesting by the fact that the design of the lower reaches of the Wymondham west tower, under construction from c.1450 until 1498, have been attributed to James Woderofe, who between 1410 and 1430 served as master mason of the cloister campaign.\textsuperscript{238} John Woderofe had died by 1443/4.\textsuperscript{239} James probably died in 1450, when his executors were appointed, including two masons.\textsuperscript{240}

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\textsuperscript{236} Nichols 2002, 66; Cattermole 2007, 93.
\textsuperscript{237} This is found on six other Norfolk church porches, but only at Wymondham does this spandrel decoration find an echo the programme of the bosses: Lunnon 2012, 130 listing East Tuddenham, East Dereham, Great Witchingham, Norwich St George Colegate, Pulham St Mary and South Walsham.
\textsuperscript{238} Pevsner and Wilson 1999, 2:791–808; Fawcett 1975, 373. This attribution is on stylistic grounds, based on the moulding profiles of a group of churches similar to Wiveton, and to the Erpingham Gate (the latter is certifiably by the Woderofes). Fawcett attributed the Wymondham tower to James Woderofe confidently in his PhD but then expressed reservations subsequently, lamenting the lack of other connections between the cloister walk and the Wymondham group. See Fawcett in I. Atherton, Fernie, and Harper-Bill 1996a, 152-3.
\textsuperscript{239} Fernie and Whittingham 1972 citing Roll 1083: stone was bought from James Woderof at a reduced price as a donation in memory of his brother’s soul.
\textsuperscript{240} See Trend 2015; the executors were John Jekkys and Nicholas Berkyng. It was John ‘Jakes’ who also completed the lavatorium in the Cathedral cloister with Woderofe in 1444-5: Sekules 1996, 205.
James Woderofe was involved with the Wymondham tower, it would have to have been during the last few years of his life, but his executors, apprentices and assistants were well-placed to carry on their master’s commissions, inheriting templates, tools and idiom. If the Woderofe connection is in any way correct it would be a suggestive link between the fifteenth-century works at Norwich and Wymondham. Even if Woderofe was not personally responsible, the sculptural similarity suggests such communication as we might expect between two major Benedictine foundations with coeval building programmes. That the same figural sculptors might have worked on both projects seems possible.

*St Remigius, Hethersett* [Figs.122-126]

4.5 miles to the north east of Wymondham is the parish church of St Remigius, Hethersett. The church is mostly fourteenth-century Decorated, but a two-story Perpendicular north porch of cut and knapped flint was added in the fifteenth century. The porch has a stone tierceron vault with five historiated bosses very similar to those at Wymondham, though the arrangement is different: the Annunciation, Nativity, Resurrection, and Ascension are arranged chronologically, clockwise, starting in the south, around a central Coronation. The spatial idiom is similar to that at Wymondham, and in some instances (the Ascension) it is remarkably so. The format of the Nativity is different (Mary is shown in bed with the Christ child standing in her lap); the Resurrection is somewhat different, though basically similar (the Hethersett version shows a larger tomb and a Christ in delicately robes, not a loincloth). The spherical distortion is more exaggerated here at Hethersett (Annunciation). No documentary evidence exists that would enable an exact dating of the vault and its bosses; it seems sensible to offer c.1440-50 based on the connection to Wymondham. The porch

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242 See the church guide “The church of St. Remigius and history of the parish”, Anon 1960.
spandrels do not bear an Annunciation as at Wymondham, but rather shield-bearing angels (more protruding versions of which serve as end-stops to the main door’s hood moulding).

*St Mary’s, Denton* [Figs.127-131; Model VIII]

Denton, a wealthy parish in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, is roughly 17 miles south of Norwich and about the same distance south east from Wymondham.243 Like Hethersett, the church is mostly fourteenth-century work (aisles, nave, chancel, round tower).244 The north porch has a fifteenth-century stone tierceron vault with bosses resembling those at Hethersett and Wymondham. The fifteenth-century vault and upper storey augmented an existing porch: the ground floor windows seem fourteenth century, and vault does not sit well with the round columns on which it rests, which seem to pre-date it and are perhaps even older than fourteenth-century. The bosses appear to have been restored in the nineteenth century, when the porch stonework was skimmed with plaster or roman cement and some of the more superficial sculptural detail clarified.245 No documentary evidence survives that would permit precise dating for the bosses; we can guess c.1440-50 but only based on our knowledge of work at Wymondham.246

The porch bosses appear to be authentic in design if somewhat refreshed in detail.247 They depict the Annunciation, Nativity, Resurrection, Ascension, and the Coronation, in the same clockwise motion as at Hethersett, but beginning this time with the Annunciation in the east. The Ascension is nearly identical to those at Hethersett and

243 Fawcett 1975, 267.
244 Pevsner and Wilson 1999, 2:277.
245 The most likely date for this seems to be during the incumbency of Rector William Arundel Bouverie, Archdeacon of Norfolk, who between 1839 and 1877 carried out much restoration work including the building of the clergy vestry: see Carslake 2013. The crowned heads on the endstops of the exterior hood moulding are perhaps part of this restoration.
247 There is a drawing of the Nativity boss published in Ingleby 1929, 52.
Wymondham (though the cloud patterning is different). The Resurrection is closer to
the example at Hethersett but is bolder in its curvature and execution; Christ wears only
a loincloth. The bascinets worn by the soldiers in this scene are fourteenth-century
looking; if they are original they would be something of a throwback; the exact details of
their styling could be a nineteenth-century anachronism, since it seems unlikely indeed
that the Hethersett bosses could pre-date 1400 given their extravagant curvature.

*St Mary’s, Hemsby* [Figs.132-135]

At St Mary’s Hemsby there is a two-storey south porch with a fifteenth-century
tierceron-star vault with bosses.248 Fawcett thought architectural work at Hemsby
generally to have been influenced by the late fourteenth-century works at the Cathedral
cloister under Wodehurst.249 My proposed sculptural connection, therefore, is perhaps
an instance of the continuing influence of Cathedral operations. The Cathedral Priory
also held the manor at Hemsby: the two localities were administratively connected.250

The sculptural bosses in the south porch are of the Joys of the Virgin.251 All the bosses
are situated to be viewed leaving the church. The Assumption replaces the Coronation,
but does not occupy the central position, which instead is given to the Ascension, which
in format is unlike the Ascensions at Wymondham, Hethersett, Denton; instead Christ
passes through a band of cloud at waist height.252 Around the Ascension (clockwise
from the south) we see: Annunciation, Resurrection, Assumption, Nativity. There is
therefore perhaps a Marian axis N-S, and a Christological E-W. In manner the bosses
are boldly distorting, but very shallowly cut; they swell outwards but the designs and

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248 Bill Wilson, in the revised 1997 edition of Pevsner, dates the whole porch to the
fourteenth century: Pevsner and Wilson 1998, 546. This seems implausible; more likely
is the notion advanced by Lunnon, of a fourteenth-century porch structure which was
vaulted and extended in the mid fifteenth century, as at Denton: Lunnon 2012, 62.
249 Fawcett 1975, 87.
251 Nichols 2002, 66.
252 Lunnon 2012, 133.
narrative features are spread across their surface thinly [Fig.133]. They are hard to make out obliquely and require inspection from multiple viewpoints.

Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, Attleborough [Figs.136-138]

Attleborough is 6 miles south-west of Wymondham. The church is mostly Decorated work c.1340, though the nave was altered between 1405 and 1436.\textsuperscript{253} Its north porch was set out along with the nave in 1378 but recommenced later as a separate project, traditionally attributed to the patronage of Sir John Radcliffe, d.1441.\textsuperscript{254}

The bosses, which adorn a tierceron-star vault, are worn and heavily whitewashed; in style they seem to have been similar to Wymondham and Hethersett, but they are not as exaggerated in curvature or as fresh-looking in their cutting as those at Denton. They show the Five Joys. The central, and largest, boss shows the Coronation of the Virgin, aligned to be viewed when one stands facing south towards the church door; around this (clockwise from north) we find: Ascension, Annunciation, Nativity, Resurrection - a chronological sequence, beginning in the east. Outside, the iconography of the porch gable (Evangelist figures around a figure of Christ blessing) echoes that originally present on the Erpingham Gate in Norwich: as well as relating to Helen Lunnon’s general argument about the comparable status of porches and gates, this strengthens the Norwich sculptural connection.\textsuperscript{255}

St Mary’s, Yaxley [Fig.139-140]

There are bosses in what Lunnon calls the ‘extremely ornate’ north porch at Yaxley in

\textsuperscript{253} Pevsner and Wilson 1999, 2:186.
\textsuperscript{254} Lunnon 2012, 90; citing Fawcett 1979, 81; Pevsner and Wilson 1999, 2:78, 186. Lunnon questions this attribution but upholds a construction date between 1425 and 1444: Lunnon 2012, 89.
\textsuperscript{255} Antiquarian drawings show that tetramorphic statues adorned the pinnacles of the gate: Lunnon 2012, 90.
Suffolk, but they do not follow the Five Joys tradition. The porch is known from to have been built prior to 1458/9. Its parapet pinnacles depict Christ in Majesty and the four beasts of the Apocalypse, as at Attleborough. At Yaxley, however, this imagery is repeated internally on the vault bosses, one of which shows Christ displaying his wounds. The bosses are much damaged, but appear to have been spherical and globular in their modelling of scenes. The central boss shows the Coronation of the Virgin, with idiomatic bevelling; around this are angels bearing banners, as at St Helen’s in Norwich.

3.2 St Helen’s Church, Great Hospital of St Giles’, Norwich [Figs 141-147; Model VII]

The Great Hospital was founded by Walter Suffield, Bishop 1244-57, and dedicated to St Gregory, the Virgin and St Anne; it incorporated the parish church of St Helen’s. Late in the fourteenth century Bishop Despenser rebuilt the chancel, probably employing Robert Wodehurst to do so. In the mid fifteenth century the whole nave was reworked and enlarged. The extant chantry, which sits like a transept to the south of the crossing, is the product of multiple revisions. A smaller chapel or transept existed before the nave was rebuilt in the mid fifteenth century: this is suggested by the physical

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256 Lunnon 2012, 178 citing National Archives PROS 1114/287.
257 John Harvey has argued that this new chancel, which has a chestnut ceiling with stencilled eagles, was the work of John Wodhirst. Wodhirst (or Wodehurst) worked on the presbytery at the Cathedral 1350-60, and by 1385 he was personally supervising operations in the Cathedral cloister. See Rawcliffe 1999, 116–17.
258 I am grateful to Zachary Stewart for his assistance in unravelling the construction sequence outlined here. According to Stewart, a mid fifteenth-century reworking is suggested by: quatrefoil piers with spurs and polygonal capitals and the tracery (some of which is renewed); scars at the west end that indicate that the earlier west wall was substantially shorter and lacked a north aisle; the current doorway and blocked window aperture. This indicates that the earlier nave/infirmary was a one-story structure with a single aisle on the south side, abutting the porch to the south, the tower to the west, and the chantry chapel to the east. This was replaced by the current taller two-story structure with two matching aisles in the mid-fifteenth century.
evidence of the ‘pier’ in its northwest corner. The chantry vault, however, is an even later insertion, coeval with an expansion of the chantry which necessitated the creation of new south and east walls with four-light windows. I would argue, in agreement with Zachary Stewart, that this expansion and vaulting occurred ca.1450, under the influence of Bishop Lyhart, rather than ca.1480 under Bishop Goldwell as has traditionally been assumed. I favour an attribution to Lyhart’s episcopacy because of the similarity between the chantry vault and the Cathedral’s nave and Bauchun chapel, both of which, according to Woodman, date from before 1463. The chantry bosses are even more accomplished than those of the Bauchun; they only slightly resemble those of the Cathedral nave, which are cruder; they are entirely unlike those of the Cathedral presbytery vault constructed by Bishop Goldwell, which are barely figural.

The Hospital would have been a lively building site throughout the fifteenth century, and the mid-century was a particularly busy time: in 1447 work began on a new suite of guest chambers, a new larder, and a new refectory off the cloister, not finished until 1457; work on the new cloister began in 1448, under the masons John Everard (who also worked at the cathedral) and Robert Buchan, and was ongoing until 1456-7. A

259 Pers. comm. Zachary Stewart: its north and west responds have been designed to match those of the freestanding piers in the nave. Originally there would have been an east respond, too, but this was “sliced off” at a later date. The south respond, though, is set well to the south of the rest of the “pier” in order to support the arch that divides the south nave aisle and the chapel, indicating that, when the nave was rebuilt in the mid fifteenth century, the west wall of the chapel already existed. The nave mason’s solution was to insert a “three-sided pier” on the north end of the wall and then “punch” an archway through the same wall—the responds and the moldings of which were designed to match the rest of the architecture of the nave.

260 Pers. comm. Zachary Stewart: in order to accommodate shallower curvature of the canopy, it seems it was necessary to slice off the east respond of the northwest “pier” and wall up the south side of the western half of the north arch to provide enough mural surface for the wall rib.

261 For this assumption see Rawcliffe 1999, 130; and Rose 2006, 7.


263 In the year ending at Michaelmas 1448, for example, twenty-eight different craftsmen and their assistants were paid wages. Rawcliffe 1999, 58.

264 Rawcliffe 1999, 61.

265 Rawcliffe 1999, 130; on him see J. Harvey and Oswald 1954, 102–3.
good deal of construction work was going on at the Hospital around the middle of the
century and there seems to be no reason why the chantry might not also date from this
c.1450 period. A rough date of 1450-60 seems sensible for the bosses; this also ties
them more closely to the other mid-century ‘Joys’ sequences of the Wymondham group
described above.

The central boss is an ornate Coronation of the Virgin. Around this there is an inner
ring of bosses completing the Five Joys of Mary (Annunciation, Nativity, Resurrection,
Ascension [Figs.141-147]). The Resurrection is very much like that at Denton [Model
VIII], with even more confident curvature of the tomb and surrounding bodies [Model
VII; Fig.142]. The Ascension is along the same lines as those we have seen but the
cloud-patterning is more ornate, with something like an implied fan-vault formed of the
cloud itself. The curvature is very dramatic. The Nativity is rendered in lots of detail,
with animals, picket fence, and midwife; there is an exaggerated use of the sides and
interstitial spaces of the boss, where angels gather and animals feed, all invisible when
standing directly below. Interspersed between these ‘Joys’ at the intercardinal points
there are four saints - Margret, Catherine, Edmund, Edward - and each looks in towards
the Coronation. These are surrounded in turn by an outer ring which is a mixture of
foliate bosses and the twelve apostles.

The carving of the chantry bosses is remarkably fine. They surpass even those in the
cloister in terms of bravura spatial distortion yielding near-spherical wholes. Their
excellent condition and legibility are thanks both to their complete escape from
iconoclasm and the refreshing of their polychromy in 1944 under John Chaplin.

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266 In the year ending at Michaelmas 1448, for example, twenty-eight different craftsmen
and their assistants were paid wages; work on the new cloister began in 1448 and was
ongoing until 1456-7: see Rawcliffe 1999, 58, 61, 130.
267 These four saints are a common East Anglian combination: see Marks 2004, 196.
268 See my Chapter 4, p.121.
There is a possible administrative connection between the chantry bosses and those at Hethersett in that the Hospital acquired property there in 1461.\textsuperscript{269} It is also perhaps worthy of note that the St Giles’ Processional, with its fascinatingly distortive liturgical diagrams (late fourteen/early fifteenth century) was made for the Hospital.\textsuperscript{270}

3.3 Other mid-century boss schemes in Norwich

\textit{Norwich Cathedral nave} [Figs.148-151]

The cathedral nave was vaulted under Bishop Lyhart (1446-1472): alternate corbels carry his rebus.\textsuperscript{271} There is some disagreement as to the exact dating: Fernie sees the vault as a response to/repair following the fire of 1463, whereas Woodman argues that the vault was completed before 1463.\textsuperscript{272} There is no solid evidence for either the pre-1463 or post-1463 theory, but I am swayed by Woodman’s interpretation of the evidence and assume a date before 1463. Likewise, there is no evidence for who carved the bosses or how long this process took; an estimate of 2 weeks per boss would yield a total of c.500 working weeks required for the carving of the nave bosses alone.

The bosses show the entire history of the world from Creation to the Last Judgement.\textsuperscript{273}

Each bay is divided by transverse arches plus axial and cross-axial ridges, liernes, and

\textsuperscript{269} Rawcliffe 1999, 149, 250: the manor of Heylesdon’s in Cringleford had appurtenances in Hethersett.
\textsuperscript{270} Rawcliffe 1999, 120–21. British Library Add. MS 57534, containing coloured diagrams showing how nine major services should be performed. I discuss its graphic idiom in Chapter 7.
\textsuperscript{271} Fernie 1993, 187–90.
\textsuperscript{272} Woodman 1996, 187. It was presumably not planned before the 1449 installation of the west window, which the vault avoids. Woodman makes documentary inferences to suggest that the nave was out of action 1454-60, and he attributes this to the vaulting work; other work was going on with the nave galleries 1454-1462 which he suggests might also be coeval with the vaulting.
\textsuperscript{273} Hurst 2013; Rose 1997. For the iconography: Goulburn and Hailstone 1876; and A. Whittingham 1981.
tiercerons; each contains 24 bosses which tell a story around a larger central boss which announces the governing theme. Liernes bridge the gaps between tiercerons, reducing the size of voids to be bridged by the stone infill ‘planks’: they are functional but also increase the opportunities for bosses. The majority of bosses, as in the cloister, are orientated in the opposite direction to the flow of the narrative. There is also evidence that a mechanical swinging angel was lowered and raised through an opening in the vault: there was much that was of visual interest going on ‘up in the air’.

The sculptural style here is louder and more muscular than that employed in the cloister, and does not play with quite the same delicate curvature found both there and in the St Helen’s chantry (in a common phrase of the Middle Ages, it is more ‘distincte et aperte’: loud and clear). This is perhaps because of the craftsman’s awareness of the difference which the greater viewing distance makes: bolder, simpler shapes, which stand a chance of being perceptible at ground level, are favoured. The sculptural manner is not unlike (but somewhat finer than) that employed a century earlier at Ely, with oversized, characterful heads, chunky drapery, and bodies bending backwards over vault ribs. Bright polychromy would have helped the viewer decipher scenes. Some of the formal ‘tricks’ developed in the cloister are taken on: the Last Supper [Fig.150] offers a playful perspective (we look up in order to look down); Noah’s Ark is ‘pressed’ into a hemispherical form [Fig.148] (for this effect see the graphic convention evidenced in the Somme le Roi [Fig.152]); many bosses use the interstitial spaces between the ribs as sub-scenes within the narrative ([Fig.149], mixing the vinegar and the gall). Some scenes borrow their layout from the cloister bosses: the nave Ascension is in the cloister/’Joys’ group arrangement; the nave Crucifixion resembles cloister EC4. The Resurrection is

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274 The pattern is roughly contemporary with, but clearer than, pattern used at Winchester (where the bosses are foliate/heraldic); Fernie terms it an ‘exercise’ on the rib pattern of the Ethelbert Gate: Fernie 1993, 189–90.
276 Philip Browne noted their original bright colours, noting ‘such great variety, that there was not one which did not completely differ from all the rest’: P. Browne 1807, 15.
iconographically like those of the ‘Joys’ group but is flatter and less mannered than, for example, that at St Giles’ [Model VII].

Nowhere else do we find such an extensive and cohesive scheme of figural bosses: the formally similar schemes at Exeter and Tewkesbury lack Norwich’s holistic approach to design. The bosses may be sculpturally ‘louder’ than those in the cloister, but they are clearly a continuation of the local enthusiasm for boss sculpture, building on the local tradition in terms of ambition and extent if not in terms of precise spatial idiom.

*Norwich Cathedral Bauchun chapel* [Figs.153-155]

The Bauchun chapel is a double-square-planned chapel, added to the presbytery 1327-9, following a bequest from William Bauchun.277 A new window and perpendicular vault were added c.1460.278 Its original doorway has ‘thick, simple cylinders’, and the newer vault sits on these (as at St Mary’s Denton).279 The vault is of the same pattern as the nave, with tiercerons and liernes forming lozenges and diamonds along a N-S axis, and there are bosses at every rib junction. It seems there might be a case for the Bauchun and the nave having been vaulted roughly contemporaneously, and by similar teams. The Bauchun bosses, which are somewhere between the late cloister bosses and the nave bosses in terms of stylistic idiom, tell the story of a calumniated Empress.280 There are two central bosses within the cycle which depict the Annunciation and, interestingly, the Coronation of the Virgin by the Trinity (cf. cloisters, Worstead, Wymondham). There is also a delicate ‘pieta’ on one of the two corbels. Sculpturally the bosses are very fine indeed, with lots of interesting spatial distortions and lots of exaggerated protrusion.

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277 Fernie 1993, 183.
278 A. Atherton, n.d., 179. Zachary Stewart, pers. comm., dates this at c.1450-60.
279 Fernie 1993, 183.
280 For the iconography see James 1908; more recently, Masaji Tajiri has considered how their theme might have been arrived at and what this might mean for our understanding of fluidity between genres of poetry and sculpture: see Salisbury 2005; see also Barasch 1993.
and curvature. Scenes of the Empress’ coronation and her giving her child away delight in the fish-eye bulging of architectural structures; others bend figures backwards, and many are deeply excavated and greatly protruding. The low vault provides opportunities for close inspection and gradual discovery denied by the nave’s height, and it is these opportunities which encourage the adoption of a more mannered sculptural mode.

Norwich Cathedral presbytery

In the period 1472-99 Bishop Goldwell made major changes to the choir roof, which had been the site of various works following the collapse of the tower in 1361/2. The new stone vault was to house 132 bosses: 97 of these are rebus of the Bishop’s name; there are a few other subjects such as a Virgin in Glory, but all are stylistically very basic even compared to the work in the nave.

Norwich Cathedral transepts

The transepts only received their vaulting in the sixteenth century, following a fire in 1509. The vaulting features the arms of Bishop Nix (1501-35/6). The pattern is the same as the vaulting in the nave and presbytery but the masonry work is generally poorer, perhaps indicating a lack of funding or a lack of concern; the boss scheme is less thoroughly conceived, with some bosses out of order and many repeated, some eight or nine times. Of the style, Woodman says that it has often been remarked on unfavourably, but ‘this is less justified’; the work is comparable to that in the nave; both are ‘clear and forceful’, and both are inferior when compared to the cloister work. According to Woodman,

281 The clerestory was rebuilt 1364-86 by Robert Wadhurst and for nearly a century a wooden roof sat upon it: Woodman 1996, 179–91 Woodman suggests John Auntell as a possible master masons for the eventual vaulting.
284 Fernie 1993, 193; citing Cave 1933.
‘the flowing, delicate manner which dominated imagery from the late thirteenth century to the late fourteenth lends itself to the presentation of scenes on a miniature scale, while the bulky and dramatic manner of the fifteenth century, deriving from Burgundy and Flanders, is at best a monumental one, producing, in restricted groups and on the relatively small and distant field provided by the boss of a high vault, rather stolid and easily legible figures. 285

I will return to the question of Flemish influence in Chapters 4 and 5. Some transept bosses are particularly characterful, bending cuboidal spaces to make fish-eye curvature [Fig.156].

St George’s Tombland, Norwich

A number of minor fifteenth-century Norwich porches continue the local tradition of boss sculpture. At St George’s Tombland, Norwich, a two-storeyed south porch was added c.1495. 286 Inside there is a tierceron star vault with a central boss of St George slaying the dragon. George bends across a foliate hemisphere but the sculptural manner is not much more dramatic than in the 1330s cloisteral work. There are foliate gouts at the other junctions and a wild-man’s peering face on one boss, which greets the viewer on entry. The two-storied north porch does not have bosses.

St Peter Mancroft, Norwich

The church was begun in 1430 and consecrated in 1455. 287 The porches were added in the second half of the fifteenth century. The north porch, of two stories, was restored in 1904; it has an elaborate vault with a webbed pattern of intersecting tiercerons and liernes, with ornate cusping. One boss, of a different stone to the ribs, sits centrally: it is

286 Lunnon 2012, 117.
of St Peter enthroned, with a mitre and a staff/crozier, on a bevelled ground of cloud-frill. Its swelling is very pronounced. Lunnon reads the incorporation of a boss into an ornate rib structure as a marriage of two usually distinct types of porch ornamentation (bosses and elaborate ribwork). Nonetheless, she perceives a general shift at the end of the century away from elaborate figural sculpture, towards a stress on the vault and the virtuosity of its ribwork. The south porch vaulting is simpler in its patterning: it is a standard tierceron star, featuring bosses at all junctions; all but the central one are foliate. The central boss has been called ‘Christ in Majesty’ but it seems rather to be St Peter glorified, as in the north porch: angels and cloud-frills surround a throne which bears a bishop (? with mitre) wearing a dalmatic/amice (rather un-Christlike). Its curvature is not as pronounced as its northern equivalent.

Conclusion

Surveying the landscape of fifteenth-century boss sculpture in Norfolk, a number of conclusions present themselves.

Boss sculpture generally, and in Norwich particularly, enjoyed great popularity following the completion of the cloister works. The colossal undertaking of the sculpturally elaborate nave and transepts and the lavish detailing of minor parish church porches around the county all point towards a significant local investment in figural bosses.

The particular distortive idiom of the cloister sculpture finds its strongest echoes in local parish church porches and in the chantry chapel at St Giles’ Hospital. These bosses vary in their delicacy and approach to undercutting/protrusion, but all recall to differing degrees the tradition of spherical distortion established in the cloister, and may have been influenced directly or indirectly by its example. The architectural and administrative connections between the Cathedral Priory and Wymondham, the short

288 Lunnon 2012, 117.
289 Lunnon 2012, 118.
distances between each of the sites, and the roughly contemporaneous construction of each of these projects (1430-1460), all serve to make the cross-fertilisation of ideas and expertise a distinct possibility.

Inventive spatial play, however, also occurred at sites where the relationship to the cloister works is less obvious. At Walpole St Peter, bosses carved c.1435 display remarkable distortion and curvature, but are iconographically unlike anything in the cloister. The links between these works and what was going on in Norwich c.1425-1430 are uncertain, but the sculptural connection is strong enough to be able to speak of a shared idiom.

Part 1 of this thesis has been primarily concerned with archaeology and chronology, attempting to establish a developmental context for the 1420s Norwich bosses with which this thesis is primarily concerned. It has been possible to consolidate and synthesise existing archaeological studies of the cloister to clarify the exact chronology of the different building campaigns; it has also been possible to build on the work of C. J. P. Cave in order to offer a survey of the development of this particular idiom from its earliest beginnings in twelfth-century Canterbury to its later iterations at early sixteenth-century sites in southern England. In Chapter 2.2 I moved beyond a strictly archaeological/chronological approach in order to offer a ‘parsing’ of sculptural effects in archetypal instances of the idiom amongst the 1420s bosses. This was in order to establish a clear concept of what I define as their particular sculptural manner, enabling me to then observe the diaspora of that ‘manner’ effectively in Chapter 3. In the next part of this thesis, Part 2, I continue use the formal analysis offered in Chapter 2.2 as a prompt to further investigation, considering questions of facture. If such spatial effects can be agreed to be unusual and worthy of remark, an analysis of the likely process of their production - both in the specific context of the Norwich cloisters (Chapter 4) and in other comparable artefacts from elsewhere (Chapter 5) - might be informative.
Chapter 4 Questions of boss production

This chapter examines questions concerning the production of the bosses. It begins by considering the craftsmen (the manner of their employment, their wages, the skills for which they were valued). It moves on to consider the process of manufacture, from planning to carving to installation to polychromy. It focuses on the cloister because of the availability of documentary evidence, but it aims to extrapolate principles which are equally applicable to the production of bosses in this idiom at St Helens, Wymondam, Hethersett, Denton, and elsewhere.

4.1 Craftsmen

Throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Norwich was a major urban centre, challenged only by Bristol for its position as second city of the realm. This prosperity ensured that its built environment was continually being redeveloped: in the late medieval period, alongside the significant reworking of the cathedral fabric and cloister, the city saw the construction, extension, and continual adaptation of some 58 parish churches, as well as countless as secular buildings. Because of this plenitude of construction, Norwich was a centre for journeymen and craftsmen.

Masons, because of the peripatetic nature of their work, generally worked outside the formalised ‘guild’ structure which regulated most medieval craft work.

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290 Hassall-Smith 1996, xi. On the size of the city, between 5,000 and 12,000 (falling in the Black Death and then rising), see Tanner 1996, 255; citing Campbell 1969, 9, 16, 17; also Rutledge 1988, 27.

291 For an ongoing survey of the medieval churches see Heslop n.d.

292 Salzman 1997, 30–44, partic. 33; Coldstream 1991, 10–11. There is no evidence, for example, that mason’s lodges were established as formal institutions in this period in England, unlike the mid-fifteenth century structure seen in the Regensburg Ordinances.
operations were common: families like the Vertue family, who worked in England for three generations in the fifteenth century, mirror the circumstances of the Ramseys or the Woderufs working in Norwich.\textsuperscript{293} Master masons such as the Woderufs would commonly be given contracts for sections of a project, and would set up a workshop on site for the construction period (a temporary ‘lodge’ where banker work would take place); they would hire the necessary workmen to complete a project, both labourers and specialists, for short periods on an \textit{ad hoc} basis.\textsuperscript{294} Project management was therefore a three-tiered affair, with the clergy (the \textit{provisors}) directing the basic brief, providing the main administrative framework and negotiating the contracts with master masons, who then arranged for the hiring of other artisans as required.\textsuperscript{295} Master masons would sometimes choose to work with the same specialist sculptors on multiple projects, but this was not always the case.\textsuperscript{296}

It is important to stress this fact, that the sculptural bosses in question were not produced by the master masons, but by specialist subcontractors who worked to a brief and in collaboration with the master masons but who surely enjoyed a degree of creative freedom commensurate with their ability. In this section, therefore, I examine the notion of specialist ‘\textit{gravours}’ and their competencies, before returning to the question of their creative latitude.

\textsuperscript{293} Salzman 1997, 14, 97; Coldstream 1991, 13.
\textsuperscript{294} At Troyes, likewise, there was only rarely a ‘unified group’ of artisans under a master mason: Murray 1987, 111, 202.
\textsuperscript{295} At Norwich the specialist workers are paid directly by the communar, rather than by the Woderufs: Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 41 citing Roll 1070.
\textsuperscript{296} There is evidence of lasting partnerships, such as that between Juan Guas and the sculptor Ógas Cueman in Toledo, or between Hans Beheim and Adam Kraft in Nuremberg; see for references Coldstream 1991, 64. Fawcett drew attention to more local instances where the same architects used different sculptors: compare for example the Morley tomb at Hingham, and the Erpingham gate: Fawcett 1975, 326–93; 1982; quoted alongside other examples in Sekules 1996, 204.
Specialist ‘gravours’

The cloister documentation records the names of a number of ‘gravours’ employed while John and James Woderuf were serving as architect-mastermasons: some are explicitly linked with the bosses, and others we can ascribe to boss work by inference. These gravours were brought onto the site to do specialist work; they were well-paid, and they were peripatetic, often being given board and lodging. The employment of such traveling specialists reflects a general trend in fourteenth and fifteenth century building: the rise of the ‘freelance sculptor’.

Specialist peripatetic sculptors in both stone and wood are recorded on English building sites before the 1400: William Lyngwode, a ‘master carver’, was lent by Bishop Salmon of Norwich to Winchester Cathedral in the early fourteenth century. They became more common in the early fifteenth century. Some are referred to as ‘imagers’ [imaginarius]: in 1323 the Exeter Cathedral authorities paid an ‘imaginarius’ for cutting images for the choir screen. The term ‘gravour’ does not appear until a little later: it is first recorded in 1398, and unlike ‘imaginarius’ it refers exclusively to the task of engraving, carving, digging or chiselling. There is evidence of specialist figural

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297 See Chapter 2, p.61.

298 This sort of fluidity of specialist labour is a feature of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in England generally: the average town would not provide sufficient employment for any large number of specialist craftspeople: Salzman 1997, 34. The same arrangement occurs on the continent: specialist sculptors, itinerant carvers, and ‘ymagers’ such as Nicholas Halins, were hired in order carve images at Troyes in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: Murray 1987, 69, 190.


301 It was a number of imaginatores, for example, who carved the Eleanor crosses: Salzman 1997, 32. The term is also sometimes applied to painters.

302 In 1398 the term was applied to an engraver in Trevisa’s translation of Bartholemew de Glanville’s De Proprietatibus Rerum. John Lydgate’s The Fall of Princes (1430s) is the earliest instance of the term referring to a sculptor specifically: ‘Callicrates a graver moost notable Of white yuor. His hande his iye so iuste were and so stable Of an ampte to graue out the lykenesse’. In Geoffrey’s Promptorium Parvulorum, c.1440, a gravoure is straightforwardly a sculptor. The noun’s usage in England is closely tied to the verb to ‘grave’ (to engrave,
sculptors, both ‘imaginatores’ and ‘gravours’, employed throughout the fifteenth century. John Massingham of London, for example, was a peripatetic carver of some renown: he provided ‘ymagerie’ at Canterbury in 1436, and was employed at Oxford and Eton.\textsuperscript{303} At Exeter, in 1323-4, a sculptor was brought from London to carve certain pieces, even though members of the on-site workforce also did sculptural work themselves.\textsuperscript{304} A similar thing happened in the early fifteenth century at Wymondham where, despite there being an established masons yard, the fine carving was done by peripatetic specialists: the churchyard cross was put together by a large team in which local workers were joined by a specialist ‘gravour’ Simon Betts.\textsuperscript{305} When Betts moved on to his next project at Buckenham, it is alleged that one stone had to be couriered directly to him for his specialist attention before being returned to Wymondham.\textsuperscript{306}

The ‘gravours’ named at Norwich ought therefore to be positioned within this tradition of travelling expert sculptors. Such men came to Norwich not only from other regions of Britain, but also from continental Europe, particularly from other North Sea-facing regions such as the Low Countries which were easily connected to Norwich by the major port at Great Yarmouth.\textsuperscript{307} The gravour named as Bricius ‘Dewcheman’ working at Norwich is traditionally interpreted as Brice ‘the Dutchman’, and assumed to be of

to dig, to excavate), which is well used in the fourteenth century, and to the French graveur, already in use in the fourteenth century: see Hatzfeld, Darmesteter, and Thomas 1895, 1193. It is a common way of referring to sculptors in fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century English contracts: see the contract from 1511 in Fawcett 1975, 533 vol.2.

\textsuperscript{303} He was at All Souls Oxford in 1438 for 15 weeks at 4s 8d a week and with board and lodging; in 1448 he was paid £10 for making an image of the Blessed Virgin for the altar at Eton: Salzman 1997, 32. A summary of his career is also given in Stone 1955, 206.

\textsuperscript{304} For this see Coldstream 1991, 63; and Erskine 1981; 1983.

\textsuperscript{305} Richard Ylward was the local man in charge, with two assistants; Betts required board and lodging in the town, and was supervised by a master mason: see Cattermole 2007, 104.

\textsuperscript{306} Cattermole 2007, 104. In 1514, 20d was spent on the carriage of the stone from Wymondham to ‘Bokynham’ and back; Cattermole infers Betts’ movements from this information.

\textsuperscript{307} Bates and Liddiard 2015, 117; also Ayers 2016, 97; Marks, Williamson, and Townsend 2003, 15.
Netherlandish origin.\textsuperscript{308} This is plausible since other immigrant carvers can be identified working nearby. Robert Mundeford, probably from Montfoort, Utrecht, is recorded in Norwich in 1455 as a carver and an alien, and might be responsible for the bosses at Salle, though the evidence for this is scant.\textsuperscript{309} Two other carvers at work in Norwich contemporaneously have names which might indicate origins from other North Sea shores: from Germany/Flanders, Robert Hakun, free as a carver 1445-6; and from Norway, Thomas Alman, free as a carver 1437-40.\textsuperscript{310} Netherlandish workmen of other trades are also recorded as working in Norwich in the early fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{311} In Chapter 5 I consider the idiomatic and sculptural parallels strengthened by this Netherlandish connection; here my concern is only to stress the distances travelled by peripatetic craftsmen.

Sites such as the Norwich cloister could draw their specialist gravours from divers regions, from as far afield as the Netherlands. The many instances listed of named gravours travelling and working alone suggest that their specialist skills were in demand.

\textsuperscript{308} See for example Sekules 2006, 297.
\textsuperscript{309} King 1996, 218.
\textsuperscript{310} Bates and Liddiard 2015, 105; quoting L'Estrange 1888, 3, 66. On Netherlandish carvers in medieval England generally, see Stone 1955, 225–33. This transfer of specialist sculptors overseas perhaps worked both ways: it has been suggested that William Ramsey may be the ‘Guillaume de Nourriche’ who carved two apostles in 1319-24 for the Apostolic College of the church of Saint-Jaques-l'Hopital in Paris: Bates and Liddiard 2015, 94–95.
\textsuperscript{311} John Wighton (glazier) employed William Mundeford, probably from Montfoort in Utrecht, documented in Norwich in 1436; Mundeford’s son John went on to become head of the workshop following Wighton’s death. Another son Henry trained with another Franco-Flemish glazier, Henry Piers, who worked in the city. See King 1996, 218.
Wages and privileges

Here I briefly analyse the sums paid to the gravours working in the cloister in the fifteenth century, in order to compare their wages and privileges to those of their contemporaries.

1 pound = 20 shillings
1 shilling = 12 pence

1415-16: ‘£5 10s 0d for John Watlington’s 33 weeks work at 2s 4d’ 312
33 weeks at 2s 4d ought to make £4 7s 0s, so there’s an extra £1 3s being spent, either on his lodging - ‘Worsted bed and tester bought for him with thick mattress, two pairs of sheets, thick blue bed and cushions’ - food, or robe: making a real wage of 3s 4d, p/w, or 6.6d p/day for a 6 day week. 313 This figure could, however, include his expenses on materials, but these seem to be accounted for elsewhere. Fernie and Whittingham note that Watlington is treated well.

1415-16: ‘Bricius Dewcheman paid 3s 4d for 13 weeks then at 2s 4d for 33 weeks’ 314
6.6d p/day for 13 weeks, then 4.6d p/day for the rest. The 33 weeks presumably match those worked by John Watlington, during which both men are paid at the same weekly rate of 2s 4d.

1427-28: ‘£5 on wages for John Horne, gravour, 15 weeks at 4s a week’ 315
15 weeks at 4s ought to make £3 - so was he paid £2 more, in cash or in kind. 4s a week is in any case a very generous wage (8d per day). Nonetheless, John Massingham of London was employed at All Souls Oxford in 1438 for 15 weeks at 4s 8d a week,

312 Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 41, Roll 1070.
313 Saturday tended to be either a half or three-quarter length working day: for a summary of the evidence on working hours see Salzman 1997, 45–67.
314 Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 41, Roll 1070.
315 Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 43, Roll 1077.
with board and lodging, so this high price was perhaps reasonable for a reputable
itinerant sculptor.\textsuperscript{316}

1427-28: \textit{William Reppys, gravour, for 6 keystones at 6s 8d each.}\textsuperscript{317}
This is 2 weeks of work per stone, if we assume he was paid at the
Dewcheman/Watlington rate of 2s 4d per week. However, if he were paid 4s p/w, like
John Horne, this would represent only a week and a half. The notion that each boss
took two weeks to carve is therefore approximate.\textsuperscript{318}

In summary, it would seem that the Norwich sculptors were well-paid by the standards
of their day. Their pay ranged between 4.6d p/day (with lodging) and 8d/day (perhaps
also with lodging): this roughly comparable to what a master mason would have been
paid at this time in this region, and in John Horne’s case, it is perhaps even more
generous than this.\textsuperscript{319} It is possible that these named \textit{gravours} brought with them
apprentices or labourers who did the roughing out and the ‘grunt work’: they might
have been paying these hands out of their own wages (as was standard), which would
represent a reduction in their personal wage. It is not possible to make a comparison
with the wages paid to the Norwich master masons, the Woderufs, since the Woderufs
were paid mostly by contract, in lump-sums which included the procurement of other
labourers and materials.\textsuperscript{320} The most we can say is that the Norwich boss carvers’ wages
compare favourably to other known examples of well-paid freelance sculptors.

\textsuperscript{316} For Massingham see Salzman 1997, 32.
\textsuperscript{317} Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 43, Roll 1077.
\textsuperscript{318} This assumption begins in Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 42. It is repeated in Rose
1997, 42; and Sekules 2006, 297 without citation. Larger bosses at Exeter cost 5 shillings
each, so Reppys’ pay is more generous: see Hulbert 1998, 35.
\textsuperscript{319} Between 5s and 7s a week would be the right wage for a master working with his
apprentice: see Salzman 1997, 49; citing Thorold Rogers 1866, 2:514–20: throughout the
fifteenth century a skilled labourer earned c.6d a day and an unskilled one 4d. For a
comparable site nearby, see Salzman 1997, 76: in Cambridge in 1436 the weekly wages
paid at the King’s Hall were: chief mason: 3s for salary, 22d for food; hewers: 4s. 8d. for
salary, 22d for food.
\textsuperscript{320} Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 42.
Valde capiens & subtilis

One documentary source offers further insight into the sorts of skills that were admired in these specialist sculptors. In 1391 in Oxford, the mason John Sampson was accused of flouting a recently imposed ‘pay cap’, an attempt to regulate the pay of craftsmen in the wake of labour shortages after the Black Death. But Sampson had his conviction overturned because his specialist skills were agreed to deserve a higher wage:

‘As to John Sampson, for that he is a master freestone mason and extremely knowledgeable and skilful (valde capiens & subtilis) in that art and in carving (entaille), and because the takings of such masons cannot be put on a level (assederi) with the takings of other masons of another grade and rank in depth of knowledge (altitudine discrecionis) and judgement of that art (sapiencie artis illius), by the discretion of the Justices he was discharged.’

This brief assessment of Sampson’s qualities (valde capiens & subtilis, altitudine discrecionis, sapiencie artis illius) serves to flesh out our image of the freelance sculptor/carver as craftsman whose skills were in demand, who was even seen as exceptional and deserving of special treatment.

We can therefore see that, around 1400, flamboyant sculptural work (subtle, wise, well-judged, skilful) might well have served as a calling card for freelance carvers like the knowledgeable and skilful John Sampson or the Norwich gravours in question. Sculptors such as Sampson, Watlington, Horne, Repps, and Dewcheman, employed for their particular expertise, would presumably have been given the freedom to invent and to show off: to apply the ‘knowledge, wisdom, and art’ which justified their higher wages to the problem in hand: to the question of ‘how’ forms ought to be arranged within a

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321 Salzman 1997, 74. The source is transcribed in Salter 1921, 2:21–22: ‘Et quo ad predictum Iohannem Sampson, pro eo quod ipse est magister lathomus liberarum petrarum & valde capiens & subtilis in arte illa & de entaille & quia capcio talium lathomorum non potest assederi cum capcio altiorum lathomorum alterius gradus & status pro altitudine discrecionis & sapiencie artis illius, per discretionem iusticiariorum predictorum dimissus est &c.’
boss, even if the question of ‘what’ the programme was to contain had already been largely decided. This context, of the increasingly specialised itinerant ‘gravour’, is vital to understanding the distinctive idiom of the late Norwich bosses and the way they prioritise idiosyncrasy and spatial wit.

Once on site, not much is known about the specifics of the collaborative working relationship between these peripatetic gravours and the master masons who employed them, in terms of the degree to which they were briefed and the extent to which they enjoyed creative freedom.\(^{322}\) The iconographical programme was presumably devised by the commissioning clergy, perhaps in collaboration with the managing master masons.\(^{323}\) To what extent can we consider the peripatetic sculptor, working to a brief, to be a free agent? The freedom of forms within frames has sometimes been rather simplistically equated with the freedom of sculptors within their societal roles.\(^{324}\) We do not need to pursue this contentious social allegory to see that there is a real sense (vital to our discussion of sculptural idiom) in which the sculptor is a ‘free’ artist: as Pierre du Colombier put it, ‘la liberté de l’artiste créateur, dans les arts plastiques, est une liberté du ’comment’ and non du ’quoi’, de la ’forme’ et non du ’fond’ – freedom of ‘how’ rather than ‘what’; of ‘form’ rather than ‘substance’.\(^{325}\) In sculpture scholarship to date too much attention has been given to the ‘what’, and too little to the ‘how’ which was the gravour’s domain.

The following section turns to this question of process, interrogating the methods used by gravours to render the required scenes within the confines of the boss shape.

\(^{322}\) This problem is raised in: Murray 1987, 69 & passim.; White 1959; Bonne 1986; Sekules 1990, 129–47. Murray notes that capitals begun by itinerant Flemish masters were in one instance (1455) finished by master masons on site: this may simply be an example of the chaotic conditions there, rather than indicative of standard practice.

\(^{323}\) See Murray 1987, 202.

\(^{324}\) Schapiro 2006, 34; Berliner 1945.

\(^{325}\) Du Colombier 1953, 93; Kurmann 1987a, 268 raises a similar question. As Berliner’s paper shows, such questions were of particular import after Nazism and Stalin.
4.2 The production process

In this section I deal with the specifics of the bosses’ fabrication. I combine insights from other sites and sources with the evidence that can be gleaned from the bosses themselves.326

Preparatory drawing and/or clay models

There is no evidence at Norwich as to whether preparatory drawings were made for the bosses, and if so, by whom. Martial Rose has suggested that block book prints such as the Biblia Pauperum informed the compositions of some of the later nave bosses.327 But even if similar sources existed in the cloister it seems unlikely that they could have been adequate bases for direct carving: other intermediary studies, in two or three dimensions, were surely used to work out the distribution of figural elements across each boss.328

We know of other fifteenth-century sites where painters were called upon to provide designs for sculpture.329 In Brussels in the 1440s, Van der Weyden’s workshop provided drawings for carved capitals for the new town hall: one drawing survives, the so-called ‘Scupstoel’ drawing, and is discussed below. In Leuven, the city painter Hubrecht

326 For very general introductions to sculptural techniques, see Williamson 1988, 13–16; 1987; Coldstream 1991. Recent work exploring links between production processes and sculptural style includes Gomółka 2016; Stratford 1990. More focussed studies are mentioned below where appropriate.
327 Rose 1996, 370–72. This may well be the case, just as the 1320s Apocalypse bosses were informed by Anglo-French prose manuscripts. It is well documented that misericord carvers often borrowed from these sources: see Purvis 1936, 120; Grössinger 1996b, 65–71; M. Jones 2002. Makers of Norfolk rood screens in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries also used woodcut designs.
328 An important recent study of the use of models in medieval workshops is Borlée, Terrier Aliferis, and Joubert 2018.
Stuerbout produced the designs for the consoles in the town hall.\textsuperscript{330} This also happened later at Troyes, where there is extensive evidence of sculptors working to cartoons produced by painters.\textsuperscript{331} The silence on this issue in the Norwich cloister accounts, however, might suggest that this did not happen at Norwich: given that the gravours are named, we might expect a painter to be named too, had one been involved. Arguments \textit{ex silencio} are difficult, but we might reason that, if preparatory drawings were used, they must have been devised by the gravours themselves.\textsuperscript{332}

What kind of drawing(s) might have been required? The surviving ‘Scupstoel’ drawing from Brussels provides tantalising clues as to how such preparatory sketches might have worked, particularly pertinent to the Norwich problem because of the wrapping/rolling device employed [Fig.160].\textsuperscript{333} The capital ‘wraps around’ the compound pier like a collar of sculpted relief [Fig.161]; in order to represent the entire frieze in a single drawing, the ‘Scupstoel’ draughtsman has shaped his drawing in an arc around a blank centre. Rolling the sheet to produce a cone [Fig.162] yields a form much like the finished capital: a continuous band of figural detail, tilted downwards to be visible from ground level.\textsuperscript{334}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{331} Murray 1987, 188: recorded in 1517: ‘To Jehan Briaix, painter, for having made on paper in black and white [an image of] God for the trumeau of the central portal, two saints and one Saint Paul to show them to my Lords to know if they would be good cartoons [patrons] to make the statues of the necessary size for the portals or trumeaux, for this paid on the penultimate day of January 40s. t.’.
\item \textsuperscript{332} There is evidence elsewhere of sculptors themselves providing modelli or contract drawings to their patrons: Haverkamp-Begemann, O’Neill, and Lehman 1999 fn.12; Bonenfant 1953, 193–95; Sonkes 1969, 174; Meder 1919, 361 mentions the existence of fifteenth-century Italian contracts requiring sculptors to show their plans to their patrons.
\item \textsuperscript{334} The original capitals were replaced by faithful copies c.1860. Haverkamp-Begemann, O’Neill, and Lehman 1999, 109 describes the shape of the capital as octagonal; Rubenshuis 2002, 101 describe it as conical; Fransen 2013, 161 rightly describes a compound shape with a forward projection: the drawing suggests an inverted, truncated cone, and so is a simplification of the capital’s final form.
\end{itemize}
This drawing, described in its inscription as a ‘patroen’, is likely to have been made in order to demonstrate the proposed design to the client, but it seems possible that similar drawing strategies could have been useful to masons. The drawing manages to represent simultaneously aspects of the frieze which are mutually occluding. It is evidence of a practical facility for imagining the transformation between a 2D ‘unrolled’ design and its ‘rolled’ equivalent. Its ‘unrolling’ strategy provides the mason with necessary information: a record of the design flush with the surface of the block, with foreshortening only occurring perpendicular to the boss’ surface.

Without some ‘rolling’ or ‘wrapping’ strategy like this, it hard to see how preparatory drawing would have been of much use in planning the more complex bosses. Apprentice masons at the modern ‘Guild of St Stephen and St George’ in Norwich have made copies of some of the simpler bosses as part of their studies. Their planning process began with a single observational drawing of the existing boss [Fig.163], much like the documentary drawings by C.J.W. Winter for M.R. James’ 1911 publication [Fig.164]. But in order to carve the other faces (which their initial drawing necessarily rendered only obliquely) the apprentices resorted to a number of supplementary photographs from oblique angles [Fig.165]: leaving aside the fact that copying a boss is a very different task from designing one from scratch, we might infer from this working method that, if conventional preparatory drawing was indeed used to plan the bosses, a number of separate drawings might have been required to think through the different oblique faces of each of the more complex designs. We might imagine, for example, that at least two drawings would be required to plan the transition between John in the process of his assumption and the manna left behind in his coffin (boss NE2; Model IV; Figs.97,101). Combining such drawings would require a degree of improvisation in the carving process, discussed below. The advantage of the ‘unwrapped’ Scuptstoel

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335 In the fifteenth century, a patroen refers to a model or design, often for a tapestry. See Haverkamp-Begemann, O’Neill, and Lehman 1999, 109 fn.11 Similar instances refer to ‘patronen’ or ‘patrons’, (models), or ‘beworpen’ (designs).

336 James 1911.
drawing technique is that it minimises the ambiguity and therefore the extemporisation required in carving. What equivalent ‘unwrapped’ preparatory drawings of the Norwich bosses might look like remains a matter of speculation.

There is also a distinct possibility that the more complex bosses were thought out in some sort of ‘bozzetto’ medium, an additive modelling material such as clay or plaster. For Michael Baxandall, the three-dimensionality and multi-planar nature of some German limewood sculpture was enough to suggest that preparatory clay studies were employed. Jules Lubbock made similar assumptions regarding Pisano’s pulpits. The use of clay models has likewise been alleged in earlier medieval sculpture. Neither Baxandall nor Lubbock can offer documentary evidence, but for them the use of maquettes goes some way to explaining the distinction between sculptures conceived frontally, in a ‘painterly’ manner, and those conceived in three dimensional terms from the beginning, offering multiple viewpoints. The determinedly three-dimensional nature of the bosses, described in Chapter 2.2, might lead us to a similar conclusion. Minor bosses such as NE1, NE2, NE3, NF7, and many others in the north and west walks, are almost impossible to draw convincingly from a single angle, and thus one assumes impossible to plan by graphic means; their bending figures have a moulded quality that recall the forms of clay and pottery. The vocabulary of the trade (gravour, entaille) admittedly suggests more emphasis on cutting and engraving rather than building outwards in an additive medium, but this need not mean that the gravour could not experiment in clay (readily available at the cloister site, hauled from the banks of the Wensum) before tackling the stone itself.

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337 On improvisation in the ‘Scupstoel’ capital see Fransen 2013, 161.
339 Lubbock 2006, 89.
340 See Peter Kurmann on what sort of models might have been used in the production of sculpture at Reims: Kurmann 1987b, 268–71. Kurmann’s interest is less to do with envisioning of complex spatial forms, and more to do with the transmission of style. See also Abou-El-Haj 1994, 769, and the surviving fourteenth-century Tuscan maquette in The Cloisters, 1998.214, for a rare example of one such model.
Drawing and clay modelling are, of course, not mutually exclusive methods of thinking through a design. It seems sensible to propose some combination of ‘unrolled’ sketches, rough drawing onto stone, and models in clay or plaster, as appropriate means for planning the carving of the bosses.

The process of composing elements within the boss hemisphere, whether it was planned on paper, in clay, or in mente, was in some sense free and unsystematic; it is best described as a kind of formal ‘playing’. Play, as defined by Huizinga in accordance with medieval sources, is an activity freely entered into, characterised by the pitting of free actions against the accepted rules and constraints.\(^{341}\) Huizinga’s play theory has been of great importance to Mary Carruthers, who has worked to rehabilitate *ludus* as a core concept for our understanding of medieval art and thought, a serious method in many spheres of medieval life.\(^{342}\) Carruthers argues that seriousness and playfulness were not opposites: *meditatio*, for example, the serious pursuit of the intellectual, is playful thinking, free within bounds.\(^{343}\) The approach of the artisan was understood as a kind of *ludus*: each of the arts is thought of as a witty game between artisan/performer, artefact, and audience/umpire/judge.\(^{344}\) The gravour who twists and distorts, who freely rotates, enlarges/diminishes, stretches/compresses, is playing with space: playing within accepted bounds, but playing freely, following no systematic grid. His work is illusory since it plays (*ludere*) with figure and frame, and with our viewing position.\(^{345}\)

In Chapters 6 and 7 I will deepen the discussion of period concepts appropriate to the bosses’ effects, but given my concern with process and production in this chapter, it seems necessary to point towards relevant concepts in contemporary theories of

\(^{341}\) Huizinga 2016, 37–38 and passim.

\(^{342}\) Principally Carruthers 2013, 16–44.

\(^{343}\) Carruthers 2013, 21.

\(^{344}\) Carruthers 2013, 21; on workshops as communities of playful experiment see also Kavaler 2012, 231–42; 2008 passim.

\(^{345}\) This is a playful reclaiming of ‘illusion’ as a proper term for medieval art, against the attempts of early-modernists to monopolise it: see Binski 2019, 153–57 especially, and passim.
making. Geoffrey of Vinsauf, for example, referenced the artisan’s making of a *mappa mundi* as an exemplum for the poetic method: ‘let the mind’s interior compass first circle the whole extent of the material. Let a definite order chart in advance at what point the pen will take up its course, or where it will fix its Cadiz’. Geoffreys image is apt for the boss carver, whose design constraint is circular. The limits and fixed points of your material must be sketched before playful, contingent construction can begin: like a builder planning a house, like a poet sorting his material, like a mapmaker using a compass: the boss carver or misericord carver accepted the governing hemispherical shape of his scene before working out how to distribute his material within it, pushing against its bounds.

This mixture of the formulaic and the free is crucial to our sculptural idiom. Inherited formulae (the hemispherical boss; or the misericord wedge and the column capital – see Ch.5), gradually negotiated by successive craftsmen over decades and centuries, offered an animating constraint, into which had to be fitted the inherited iconography. But within these two prescriptions (*what* is to be depicted; *what shape* that scene must be) there remains a great deal of freedom for the carver (freedom as to *how* to reconcile those two contrary charges). Freedom – to play with space and line, to twist and distort - flourished within and because of the rules of the game. Just as the sonnet’s syllabic cage relieved the Romantic poet of an unbearable burden (of ‘too much liberty’), so the boss cutter’s acceptance of the bosses’ border charged his task and energised it.  

*Carrving*

The bosses are mostly carved in Caen stone. Like most medieval building sites, those in Norwich relied on an extensive network for the supply of materials: stone had to be shipped in since there are few sources of freestone near Norwich; it came from Barnack,

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347 Wordsworth explored the theme of creative constraint in his sonnet ‘Nuns fret not their convent’s narrow room’: Wordsworth 1854, 215.
the Isle of White, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, and Caen, and almost all was shipped in via Yarmouth, where it entered the river systems of the Yare and the Wensum and arrived through the canal to be unloaded on the quay. Caen is a homogeneous limestone suitable for figural carving; it was the only French stone imported in quantity in the fifteenth century and the most common choice for freestone work in the south of England. Softer stones such as Avesnes limestone were used for equivalent work in the Brabant (see my Ch.5), but the Caen used at Norwich is more limited in its potential for undercutting. Worked carefully it can sustain the combination of deep excavation and protrusion evinced by the bosses, though some of the figures’ undercut limbs stretch its capabilities in a virtuosic fashion.

The communar and pitancer rolls make particular mention of the ‘lumps’ [gobetz] purchased for the carving of bosses: appropriate shapes and sizes were procured specifically for the task. Once on site these ‘gobetz’ would have been roughly shaped on bankers, with an axe, to form the basic ‘boss’ shape [Fig.170]. The ‘lump’ having been shaped into a regular ‘hemisphere’ with protruding rib-ends, the desired design would have been sketched over the surface in chalk [Fig.168]. Even if some form of ‘unrolled’ sketch (like the surviving Scupstoel drawing) had been used, there is likely to have been some improvisational work occurring here: in the case of the Scupstoel, the sculptor divided the composition into sections, putting groups of figures/objects on each ‘face’ of the pier; extra details were invented to fill the empty spaces between these groups; the sculptor ‘enjoyed a certain artistic freedom when transforming a drawn pattern into a sculpture’. It is possible that, in a similar fashion, the Norwich carvers used preliminaries closely for some design elements whilst improvising the interstitial

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349 Gilchrist 2005, 38; Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 14.
351 On Caen stone’s design limitations, see Snyder 2003.
352 Cranage and Tristram 1938, 141; for example Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 35 Roll 1041. Stones 6d each. For the same term used elsewhere see Kitchin 1892, 7:135.
353 For the practice of chalk drawing onto the block see Williamson and De Pury 1987, 20–23; for the same method in wood see H. Harrison 2009, xvii.
354 Fransen 2013, 161.
spaces post hoc. This seems to explain the fact that the most complex designs such as NG4 are episodic, featuring a number of planned set-pieces with looser passages in between.

With the design sketched on the block’s surface, the gravour could begin the process of ‘roughing out’, removing unwanted material from the least delicate regions. The initial surface drawing was quickly destroyed; new chalk marks would be continually applied to the stone after each removal of material, guiding the removal of stone towards the correct areas while continually defining and redefining the contours of the desired form. The carving was a gradual process of excavation, and successively finer tools were used as it progressed.\footnote{355} The standard progression was from axes and saws to points, to claw chisels, drills, finer chisels, and rasps.\footnote{356} Some passages evidence the effects which particular tools could achieve: the ‘cloud frill’ effect in boss WC4, for example, relies on rows of drilled holes dividing each row of scalloped shapes; the quatrefoil effect in NA2 is likewise drilled.

Deep undercutting is difficult to achieve in limestone and so the protrusion of delicate detail is a virtuosic feature. One surviving contract, for the vaulting of St George’s Chapel, Windsor in 1506, goes so far as to specify that the bosses there should exhibit characteristics of recession and protrusion: it demands that the bosses in the quire be ‘more pendaunt and holower’ than those in the nave.\footnote{357} These terms are interesting: ‘holower’ could mean hollower in our modern sense, but also both concave and convex interchangeably; also sometimes ‘full of holes’ (in one sixteenth-century definition, full of holes like pumice).\footnote{358} ‘Pendaunt’ meant hanging down, protruding, dangling.\footnote{359} Put

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\footnote{355} A classic study of the application of tools is White 1959, 274–83. Lindley’s analysis of the Ely reliefs borrows from White’s method: Lindley 1995, 16–21.\footnote{356} For a detailed discussion of method see Baudry et al. 1978, 148–59, 194–207.\footnote{357} Salzman 1997, 536; Hope 1913, 2:460.\footnote{358} For contemporary definitions see “Hollow, Adj. and Adv.” n.d. OED. One sixteenth century dictionary describes the ‘holow bosomes or furrowes’ that are created in serpentine, winding forms such as gathered fabric: Elyot 1538 : entry for “sinuo-are”.\footnote{359} “Pendent, Adj.” n.d. OED.
together these terms work as a hendiadys, to describe a sculptural style which is a mixture of protrusion and recession: the proviseur wanted bosses which were both swelling downwards and deeply inwardly cut, and this is what they got: the quire bosses at St Georges are indeed a step change from the flatter bosses in the nave [Figs.166,167]. These elements of protrusion and recession first developed as the ‘house style’ at Norwich: witness the hailstones which float in mid-air in boss WG6, or the bodies which stand free of the boss in WL4, or the thin bridge of stone in SL6. The St George’s contract suggests that, at least by 1506, these features were synonymous with quality in boss sculpture.  

Even when following an established ‘house style’, the individual mason retained control over how shallower or deeper passages of excavation would combine to form a pleasing whole. Since drawing is a poor indicator of desired depth there remains a significant improvisatory element in this aspect of the carving process. The carver’s task required that two-dimensional guides be realised in three dimensions [Fig.168]. But rather than being systematised, this mostly relied on an innate ‘three-dimensional imaging ability’, the ability to ‘feel out’ the final form of the boss beneath the surface of the stone. Modern stone carving apprentices experiment with perspectival foreshortening exercises, such as the construction of a miniature ‘Borromini corridor’, in order to cultivate the necessary three-dimensional imagination for such on-the-hoof foreshortening [Fig.169], but it is not known what equivalent exercises might have been expected of a fifteenth-century apprentice.

It is a feature of the ‘house style’ employed at Norwich that the shape of the hemispherical ‘lump’ is maintained in the final design, as described in Chapter 2.2. This

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360 In Italian inventories of the fifteenth century there is often distinction made between different depths of relief: between mezzo rilievo and tutto rilievo; from bassi e stiacciato ‘low and flattened’, to schiacciato ‘squashed’, to di mezzo rilievo, half relief (these are often ambiguous, rather than technical). See Wright 2007, 225. No equivalent terms seem to have been used routinely in England to distinguish between types of relief.

361 H. Harrison 2009, xvii.
formal characteristic has been observed in much earlier English sculpture, and has long been seen as being linked to the processes of production. For Sauerländer, it was a defining difference between French and English sculpture of the thirteenth century that English sculpture ‘retains much of the rectangular quality of the block of stone out of which it was carved. It looks as if the sculptor had attacked the block from one of its surfaces and had never wholly freed himself from the stereometric basic form […] English sculpting begins on the block’s face; French sculpting begins at its edge.’

Perhaps there is something of this face-orientated tradition which persists in the fifteenth-century methods at Norwich: even when the ‘block’ in question is no longer a cuboidal, stereometric one, but has become a rounded ‘gobelet’, still the sculptors’ impulse is to begin with the surface and to modulate it in such a way that it retains much of the ‘quality of the block of stone out of which it was carved’.

It seems probable that only one gravoir worked on each boss. Studies of other monuments have found other working patterns: at some sites, such as at Orvieto, many hands worked collaboratively over stretches of sculpture, often with the roughing out done by one sculptor and the more refined work by another; sometimes with a number of hands being identifiable across the surface of large reliefs. At other sites, such as in the Ely Lady Chapel reliefs and in the Percy Tomb in Beverley Minster, sculptors worked alongside one another but retained individual responsibility for distinct sections of sculpture. But unlike the complex interrelation of abutting details which such a division of labour would have had to overcome at Ely, for example, the Norwich bosses are self-contained, bounded studies: there are no junctions (apart from the rib junctions) which would require the collaboration of different sculptors. The surviving documentation evidences the fact that at least one sculptor was paid ‘per boss’ rather than for his time; these instances of piecework suggest a general model in which

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362 Sauerländer 1999, 2:454; citing Vöge 1894, 52ff.
specialist *gravours* handled the carving of each boss from design to completion without the need for collaboration. The bosses divide happily into a number of different stylistic groups (WC4, NA0 for example), and whilst we might refrain from going so far as to put a sculptor’s name to a group we can certainly see different sculptors’ styles in different bosses.

It also seems likely that the bosses were carved on the mason’s bench with only final adjustments being made *in situ*. On this point I am at variance with C.J.P Cave’s opinion, later echoed by Martial Rose, that the bosses were carved from start to finish *in situ*. Cave’s assumption was based on the difficulty of managing the junction between the boss and the moulded vault ribs: these sorts of junctions, however, are a hallmark of the Gothic style, and the ability to produce matching parts at ground level which would then be assembled at a height was the Gothic mason’s stock-in-trade. It is possible that the stumps of moulded rib that each boss has built into it would have been cut by the masonry team (rather than the *gravour*). Cave’s argument is weakened by the fact that figural sculptors generally disliked working on scaffolding. Figural pieces were generally carved in the ‘lodge’ because the risk of error and damage working *in situ* would have been enormous. Some work even took place off site. At Exeter, undercoats of red-bole polychromy found in mortar joints offer certain evidence that

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366 Cave relies on the opinions of modern masons: ‘Mr Luscombe had to superintend the building of a few bays of the cloisters at Exeter, and himself carved the bosses after they were in place; but he was also instructed to insert a few old bosses which had survived; he told me that he had far more difficulty with these bosses than with all the new ones put together.’ Cave 1948, 2–3. Luscombe’s difficulty presumably arose from the difficulty of inserting a tapering key into an existing vault, not something the Gothic mason often attempted. Cave also cites a boss in St Hugh’s choir at Lincoln which is only partly finished, but disregards the possibility that it could have been inserted in this state if it was required by the masonry team before the figural work was complete.

367 At Milan in 1485, for example, those masons who did foliage or figure carving from the scaffold were paid more than those who worked on the ground as compensation for the risk and discomfort: Coldstream 1991, 44.

368 In Exeter in 1301/2, we find some bosses being delivered to the site ready-made; in 1304/5, we also find 18 great stones being transported from Portland to Exeter ‘for bosses’, so carving took place both on and off site. Hulbert 1998, 35.
the figural carving and basic polychromy were completed *ex situ*. Bosses, it seems, were almost always finished *ex situ* and then incorporated by the masonry teams. This principle has implications for cites such as St Stephen’s Westminster, where there are discrepancies between the alleged dates of bosses and vaulting: it is highly unlikely that a boss could post-date the vault in which it sits.

In the lodge, the bosses would have been carved either on the bench or on the floor, with the stone lying flat or gently inclining on a support. It is interesting to consider the possibility that the angles at which the sculptor viewed his boss during carving influenced or created the privileged viewing angles encoded in the finished bosses. This echoes an argument advanced by Hans Gerhard Evers, that late-Gothic sculpture is multi-sided or ‘prismatic’, comprising a succession of distinct planes (between six and eight) because of the specifics of its production process. Evers’ approach is Semperian, in that he attributes this prismatic aesthetic to the positions possible on the rotating lathe on which wooden statues were often carved. Like lighthouses, Gothic sculptures radiate ‘beams’ of optimal viewing angles, or ‘radiation sectors’. This idea is reminiscent of Baxandall’s notion of a sculpture’s ‘arc of address’; Evers continually draws the effect back to the conditions of production.

It seems sensible to argue, following Evers, that the *gravour’s* perspective onto the boss while carving will have influenced the resulting relief - but it does not seem possible to go further than this without more evidence of the *gravour’s* bench set-up. The *gravour*, unlike the lathe worker, would in any case have continually and freely adjusted his working angle. Nevertheless,

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370 For discussion of this issue see Hillson 2018, forthcoming.
371 See Semper 2004. Semper’s object-material domains – textiles, ceramics, architecture, tectonics – mostly direct his attention away from figurative sculpture, but his notions of eurythmic, proportional and directional authority are applicable to figurative problems, as is his general concern with technologies of production and their relation to style.
373 For the arc of address see Baxandall 1982, 166, 172; for its relationship to production techniques see 1982, 208.
it is significant that the 45 degree viewing angle (which many bosses invite) seems a logical product of a basic bench set-up, where the carver stands at 45 degrees to their work in an inversion of the eventual viewing position [Fig. 170].

The gravour was, much more than is often stressed, an important first ‘viewer’ of their own work. As much as they may have imagined and tried to cater for an eventual viewer, trying to respond to the final position of the sculpture and the angles from which it would be visible, they also surely aimed to please themselves, creating effects which are satisfying on the bench as well as in the vault. Such self-satisfaction is an important factor in the development of a witty, idiomatic style such as this: gravours were as concerned to impress their colleagues as they were their clients and future audiences, and this accounts for style which surpasses (rather than merely fulfilling) the requirements of the brief. This point relates to a general interrelation between the roles of maker and viewer: the maker is an important viewer and critic of their own work; similarly, it has been argued that the viewer’s response to highly crafted work is also in some way imaginatively interlinked with the maker’s.

374 Elsewhere there are contractual echoes of this consideration of final position: the contract with the sculptor Adam Kraft for his tabernacle in the Sankt Lorenzkirche in Nuremberg specified that the upper registers (18m high and hard to read from the ground) ought to be made artfully and well, but not as ‘subtilig’ as the lower registers. See Kavaler 2012, 8; citing Huth 1967, 121.


376 On the maker as viewer, see Gombrich’s description of the cyclical shape of the creative process, dubbed ‘making and matching’: Gombrich 2009, 127-152 and passim. This is a fundamental point in Binski 2019. On the viewer as maker, see Scholten 2017, 60, 181. Richard Sennett and David Esterley both discuss the interplay between absorption in the crafting process and absorption of the viewer: ‘I was only an observer but somehow if felt as if I were creating the object I was observing, creating it in the act of seeing it’. Gombrich drew a connection between ease of construction and ease of perception: an object made simply can be observed simply, but a more complex one demands a greater visual effort: Gombrich 1984, 9.
Having been carved, the Norwich cloister bosses were then painted. Tristram discovered patches of extant original colour when stripping away layers of dirt in 1935, and used these as the basis for his reconstruction of the colour scheme.\textsuperscript{377} Tobit Curteis Associates surveyed the cloister in 1992, producing a thorough account of the various nineteenth- and twentieth-century campaigns of conservation and restoration; they were unable to locate any patches of original paint beneath Tristram’s scheme, but saw this as being consistent with the ‘thorough cleaning’ that Tristram had undertaken prior to his reconstruction.\textsuperscript{378} It is assumed that by 1935 the original polychromy had deteriorated very significantly, beneath various historic applications of ‘preservative treatment’ and ‘anticorrosive paint’.\textsuperscript{379} Curteis and Payne therefore cleaned Tristram’s polychromy and left it intact; it remains intact at the time of writing.

Tristram did not offer details as to the kind of paint fragments he found in 1935, but his scheme was an attempt at a faithful reconstruction.\textsuperscript{380} Fragments of original paint were likewise still visible on the bosses of St Helen’s when John Chaplin undertook their cleaning and repainting in 1944: Chaplin, like Tristram, was confident that the original fifteenth-century colours - gold leaf, brush gold, and ‘Tudor reds and greens’ painted with an oil medium - could be satisfactorily replicated.\textsuperscript{381} At other sites such as Exeter,
bosses retain much more of their original polychromy and evidence a palette of pigments and gilding broadly comparable with the reconstructions by Tristram and Chaplin.\textsuperscript{382}

It was usual for figural bosses to be painted.\textsuperscript{383} Polychromy played (and continues to play) a vital role in making the bosses’ component forms legible from ground level, distinguishing different figures by their costumes and clarifying the contours of the basic sculptural form. Tristram commented on this effect both at Norwich and at Bristol: refreshed paint lifted forms out of obscurity, making bosses ‘readable in every detail’ even from great distances.\textsuperscript{384} Colour on bosses, as Anna Hulbert notes, ‘invariably serves to reveal rather than conceal the nature of the three-dimensional form beneath it’: the painted surface amplifies the form it envelops, deepening the contrast between excavated passages and the forms that protrude from them.\textsuperscript{385} Photogrammetric models rendered without colour, along with the denuded bosses at Hethersett, Denton and Wymondham, illustrate the fact that the same forms are much harder to decipher without their polychromy [Figs.171 & 116-131; Models VII & VIII].

We lack information at Norwich that would enable us to determine exactly when and by whom the original polychromy was applied. At other sites there are records of specialist painters being employed, but no such records exist for the Norwich cloister bosses: it is therefore uncertain whether the bosses were painted by their gravours or by other anonymous painters.\textsuperscript{386} Similarly, no records of pigments acquired for the cloister

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\textsuperscript{382} On the Exeter polychromy see Hulbert 1978; 1980; 1998 passim.
\textsuperscript{383} For analysis of the distribution of polychrome decoration on wooden and stone bosses in the West Country, for instance, see Andrew 2011, 83–90.
\textsuperscript{384} Tristram 1938, 1; 1936, 7–8 (my thanks to Julian Luxford for this reference); see also Dentzer 2017, 120.
\textsuperscript{385} Henry and Hulbert, n.d. IIb “The Colour”.
\textsuperscript{386} Painters were employed to for jobs such as painting keystones in Troyes: 1546: ‘Expense for painting: To Michael Thays, painter, living in Troyes, for having painted 10 keystones of the vault of the great portal of this church and guilded them with fine gold together with the ribs and scrolls’: Murray 1987, 198. Rogier Van der Weyden is known to have painted stone reliefs: Panofsky 1971, 1:248.
specifically feature in the communar and pitancer rolls. The Exeter accounts record expenditure for expensive pigments such as azurite for bosses, but do not mention cheaper pigments.\textsuperscript{387} It is possible that at Norwich, too, these expenses were too trivial to be recorded, or that such pigments were already available on site, having been purchased for other applications.\textsuperscript{388} Whoever carried out the painting it is likely that, as at Exeter, base coats and even portions of the final colouring were carried out at ground level, with only gilding and fine coloured work taking place in situ.\textsuperscript{389} In Tristram’s extant scheme, many bosses feature a red ground: it therefore seems likely that, as at Exeter, a red lead primer covered the entire boss before figures were picked out in brighter colours. The striking contrast between this red ground and the figures protruding from it serves throughout the cloister to emphasise the sculptural qualities of protrusion and excavation described earlier in this chapter.

\textit{Conclusion}

In order to infer these processes I have leant heavily on documentary research done at comparable sites, particularly the work on Exeter by Anna Hulbert and Jean Givens.\textsuperscript{390} Where I have used information from such sites in order to speculate about conditions at Norwich I have necessarily introduced a hypothetical element into this discussion.

It is striking that there remains so much that is ultimately inexplicable about the process of production of such complex, three-dimensional objects in stone. Speculating on likely methods of planning, on parchment or in clay, goes some way towards bridging the gap between the commission and the delivery of the finished piece, but there remains an

\textsuperscript{387} Henry and Hulbert, n.d. IIb “The Colour”.
\textsuperscript{388} Red and white lead, along with gold leaf, were purchased for the painting of images in the choir: Fernie and Whittingham 1972, 13,93. The purchase of orpiment, vermilion, gold and silver leaf, and parchment for making size, are all recorded at various points in the obedientiary rolls: Curteis and Paine 1992, 2.
\textsuperscript{390} Hulbert 1998; Givens 1991.
ambiguity, commensurate with the freedom of the craftsman, around the question of ‘how’: how are the required forms to be distributed within the available space? How is the surface to be modulated and modelled to provide a convincing representation of a scene? The bosses’ manufacture cannot be reduced to a series of repeatable operations: there remains an alogon pragma, a thing which cannot be explained, which is the skilled operation of the craftsman in his material. This is true of all art objects, but it is particularly true in the case of these bosses, which, in their distinctive spatial idiom, exploit the tension between regularity and improvisation and favour rough ‘trends’ of curvature rather than any rigid system.
Chapter 5  
The idiom observed in other media

The previous chapters of this dissertation were limited to the discussion of boss sculpture, focussing on the particular idiom which developed in Norwich in the fifteenth century. This chapter, however, looks beyond boss sculpture, to find instances of comparable sculptural effects in other types of objects and media and comment on their methods of manufacture. It looks first at similar forms of spatial playfulness in English misericords of the period. It then finds similar qualities to be traceable in some Brabantine sculpture of the period, particularly the historiated socles from Leuven town hall. Finally, it looks ahead to the beginning of the sixteenth century, at boxwood ‘prayer nuts’, another product of the Low Countries: although very different in scale, function, and intended mode of viewing, they employ a similar palette of spatial tricks in order to cram scenes into their restricted hemispheres.

These three ‘test cases’ are not intended to constitute an exhaustive survey of objects which have employed these sculptural mannerisms. Nor do I intend to suggest any vector of influence or borrowing between these works and the Norwich bosses or vice versa, other than where I mention this possibility specifically. Instead, the broadening of the focus of my analysis in this chapter is intended to show that, although bosses are perhaps its most extreme manifestation, this sculptural-spatial idiom was not confined to boss sculpture alone. Whenever sculptors dealt with the challenge of cramming figures and scenes into a small space, and whenever they anticipated a variety of oblique viewing angles, they could employ some element of the boss sculptor’s ‘mode’: compressing some forms, stretching others, curving straight lines, collapsing some spaces and enlarging others: treating space as mutable and malleable for effect. Our contemporary paucity of concepts and terms to describe this kind of spatial playfulness is a problem which dogs the study of many media: just as linear perspective is a convention and a representational strategy employed across drawing, painting, relief sculpture and print, this chapter shows that its heterodox equivalents are not restricted to any one particular medium.
5.1 Misericords

Historiography

The longstanding association of misericords with folk art and simplicity has led to their neglect as a serious topic of study.\textsuperscript{391} Recent scholarship has sought to address this imbalance by analysing iconography, cataloguing subject matter, and investigating the marginal/subversive nature of the misericord.\textsuperscript{392} Despite this new attention to the details of their iconography, we are still lacking a study which takes misericords seriously as pieces of sculpture, attending to their formal peculiarities. Where attention has been paid to the ‘idiom’ of the carving, discussion has focussed on the way certain details – usually foliage and faces – are rendered, as a means by which the work might be dated and attributed to a particular carver.\textsuperscript{393} Various studies have attempted to trace particular hands and the work of schools or workshops, debating the similarities and differences of misericords at different sites, and the likelihood that they were carved by the same craftsmen.\textsuperscript{394} But no misericord study has given more than a passing mention to the kinds of questions I am pursing concerning the disposition of figures and objects in space. Paul Hardwick comes closest: of ‘the ploughman’ misericord at Lincoln he writes that

\begin{quote}
‘its curiously cramped design is profoundly affected by the constraints of the three-dimensional space available on the misericord console, constraints which pose very different challenges to the craftsman than those which are encountered on the flat plane of manuscript illumination.’\textsuperscript{395}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{391} Hardwick 2011, vii,1.
\textsuperscript{392} Most literature stresses themes of marginality and subversion: Grössinger 1996a; Hardwick 2011; for an encyclopedic approach Block 2004.
\textsuperscript{393} For example, Tracy 2009. Tracy focusses on the supporters because of the preponderance of datable foliage; an ‘unconventional but valid process in the appraisal of misericords’.
\textsuperscript{394} For example, the debate surrounding the ‘Ripon School’: Tracy 1990, 16–31 surveys the literature.
\textsuperscript{395} Hardwick 2011, 69.
In a similarly allusive fashion, Charles Tracy once refers to a ‘vigorous three dimensional quality’ in the sculpture at Ripon.\textsuperscript{396} But even taking into account these brief mentions, this is a significant lacuna: if the sculptor’s approach is ‘profoundly affected’, we ought to be able to analyse the way he responds to that challenge.

\textit{Constrained space}

The ‘canvas’ which misericords offer the sculptor is bounded and restricted: its upper edge is formed by the misericord ‘perch’ itself, which juts out from the underside main bench at an acute angle, producing beneath it a segment of space for the sculptor to invent within. One ‘blank’ unfinished misericord at Lincoln shows the basic shape of this console block [Fig.172]. This wedge-like space, its upper dimension dictated by the width of the ‘perch’, developed as the conventional format for misericord carving: its shape seems to be a logical response to the perch/bench junction (and it fulfils a structural role, supporting the perch) - but even before the introduction of any figures or scenes, it seems the basic shape differs: we find a range of basic ‘block’ shapes; some square, some chamfered/tapering, some curved, some triangular [Fig.173]. Just as the boss carver used the hemisphere as a creative constraint (when his boss could in fact have been any shape at all), so the misericord carver tended to choose one of these basic forms as the template for a whole set of misericords, cramming each of his scenes into these bounds.

The misericord carvers then responded to the challenge they had set themselves by treating pictorial space and its contents as malleable. They employed a similar palette of devices to those worked out in the bosses: mixed/prismatic/contradictory perspectives, switching from plan to elevation in close proximity; differentiating between a swelling central space and a crowded margin; twisting and compressing objects to ensure that they form a conglomerate ‘lump’. Some misericords from later in the fifteenth century

\textsuperscript{396} Tracy 1990, 26.
even employ a pronounced (if approximate) form of ‘two point’ or ‘four point’ spatial recession, with objects receding towards the edges of the console. The case studies in the following section unpack examples of each of these devices.

The round ‘supporters’ which flank most fourteenth- and fifteenth-century English misericords also became zones for figural elaboration. Despite their name these ‘supporters’ fulfil no structural role, but instead are sculptural ‘flourishes’ which terminate either end of the serpentine line formed by the perch’s forward lip, which by convention is carried through onto the bench’s underside. Early supporters are purely foliate, but as designs become more elaborate the supporters become a zone for figural ornament. The same trajectory observed in boss sculpture (of increasingly integrated designs, with flanking bosses used increasingly as figural canvases, elaborating the main narratives) is observable here too. And the typically circular nature of the misericord supporters tends to encourage similar pictorial solutions to those worked out in the Norwich bosses, with central swellings forward and gradual flattening out towards the edges [Fig.174]. As well as making play between misericords and supporters, some scenes spread across multiple misericords: the many sculptural spaces of a rank of stalls are increasingly thought of as one space consisting of multiple pockets or accretions of figures.397

It should be stressed that with misericords in situ it is very difficult to view them frontally: as with bosses, their usual reproduction as single photographic stills, taken frontally, has the potential to mislead. To get anywhere close to this view one has to kneel, crouch, or lie on the floor in the (usually tight) space between misericord and the next stall. Less anachronistic, then, is the oblique view of the misericord which one sees when looking along a row of upturned benches, seldom reproduced. Scholars have disputed the relative ‘hiddenness’ or ‘visibility’ of misericords: Tracy notes that ‘the seats were up most of the time so […] the existence of elaborate carving underneath […] is

397 For examples such as fox and bear hunts across multiple misericords see Hardwick 2011, 5–6.
perfectly logical’; Hardwick cautions that, when in use, the misericords would have been invisible, but otherwise agrees that, contrary to other scholars’ assertions, misericords were often far from hidden. Nonetheless, Hardwick acknowledges the difficulty of their positioning and describes a ‘paradox of partial hiddenness’, a deliberate strategy which tantalises, and thereby encourages stooping to look more closely. The misericords are positioned down low, whereas the bosses are high above the head, but in both cases there is a similar sense of intended difficulty: their partial hiddenness draws the viewer’s eye up or down, craning the neck backwards or forcing the viewer to stoop, challenging them to decipher the scene.

Processes: planning and carving

The idea that misericords are the ‘self expression’ of a completely free carver, popular in some twentieth-century literature, is now acknowledged to be inaccurate. Hardwick assumes that such complete creative license did not exist in England, but it seems we do not know where the responsibility for choosing scenes lay: most scholars accept a model involving some prescription on behalf of the commissioning clergy, which nonetheless left room for the carver to make choices, adding details, improvising the supporters, and working out how to distribute scenes across the stalls. Monks may have chosen the subject matter for their own seats. A number of suggestions have been made as to where certain motifs are borrowed from and the carvers’ likely source material: pattern books, carvings by predecessors, and, later in the fifteenth century, continental prints, were all possible sources for design. Hardwick is perhaps mistaken to think that all the

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398 Hardwick 2011, 6.
399 Hardwick 2011, 6.
400 For example, M. D. Anderson dubbed them ‘a rare opportunity for self-expression for carvers’: Anderson 1956, 5.
402 Hardwick 2011, 70; Grössinger 1996a, 65–71. On the use of continental prints particularly: Purvis identifies four designs found in Ripon Minster as being copies of prints from the Biblia Pauperum: Purvis 1936, 120. Several of the Westminster Abbey
joking (in terms of symbolism, visual gags, symbolic meaning) was done by and for the clerics and merely implemented by the carvers: like the boss carvers’ work, misericord carving evidences great playfulness visual wit, and there is no reason to exclude the carver as a possible author of (and audience for) this kind of humour.\textsuperscript{403}

The carving of a complete misericord – molded edges, foliate supporters, figurative scene - was probably all done by one man.\textsuperscript{404} While stone carvers were generally itinerant, carpentry was in such demand that it was specialised almost everywhere; nevertheless, most misericords discussed below are of a high quality, and therefore likely produced either by itinerant skilled craftsmen or at established centres.\textsuperscript{405}

Hugh Harrison offers an account of the technical aspects of the carving process.\textsuperscript{406} The design would first of all be sketched on the faces of the basic block. He notes spatial arrangement (whether figures stand on a shelf; whether a scene has ‘hard edges’) as being part of an individual carver’s idiom, part of how we can identify individual craftspeople, and stresses that ‘[the carver’s] overriding preoccupation is […] converting an idea into a three dimensional object.’\textsuperscript{407} Harrison, however, like Hardwick, doesn’t elaborate on this: where Hardwick merely nods to the motif’s ‘adaptation on account of its new location and medium’, Harrison assumes that the carver employed his innate ‘three-dimensional imaging ability’ but does not expand upon how this might have been cultivated, nor the intermediary steps between drawing on the block’s faces in two dimensions and the carving of the block in three. He describes only the gradual ‘roughing out’ of unwanted material, leaving high points high and working down into

the block to reveal the desired form. ‘The drawings on the wood are lost almost as soon as the carving begins, but the design remains in the carver’s mind, or perhaps sketched elsewhere.’408 The question of how this design existed ‘in the mind’ or on paper was raised in the previous chapter, and will be pursued in more detail in the final part of this thesis.

Once carving began, the process proceeded much as the stone carving described in Chapter 4, with the gradual removal of material and the use of progressively finer tools.409 It is possible that some stone masons also carved in wood occasionally, but more often these were separate crafts.410 Carving wood is in some ways more complex than carving stone, since every stroke is determined by the direction of the grain of the timber, with the constant risk that the tool will be diverted by the grain of the wood; this makes some forms particularly difficult to achieve.411

i. Ely

The Ely choir stalls and their misericords were made c.1341–2 by William Hurley of London.412 They have been described as evidencing a mixture of metropolitan and local influence, with some scenes closely resembling illuminations in the Taymouth Hours and Smithfield Decretals, both probably produced in London.413

408 H. Harrison 2009, xxxvi.
409 For the more limited tools a carpenter would have used, see Salzman 1997, 342; H. Harrison 2009; Hibben 1938, 178.
410 Tracy 1987b, 69.
411 Carving veins of leaves almost parallel with the grain, for example: H. Harrison 2009, xxxiv.
412 Lindley 1985, 33; Tracy 1987b, 34–39. Lindley suggests that John Ramsey and William Hurley worked in tandem from the start. If this was so, Tracy notes that they could have shared a workshop and a pool of skilled craftsmen working in both wood and stone.
413 Grössinger 1996a, 103.
Death of John the Baptist [Fig.175]: the left-hand supporter is a very similar compositional solution to the equivalent Norwich boss, and could well have served as a direct inspiration for it. The table swells outwards; a slight shift of viewpoint allows for the inclusion of a harpist on the margin in a near bird’s-eye view. A shift in depth of relief from Salome’s hands to her twisting middle emphasises her wheeling motion. There is no dramatic ‘perspectival’ diminution towards fringes, although the difference in scale between Salome and the harpist is emphatic. A similar rounding of the centre and tilting/flattening towards the edge is evident in misericord SB3.3 [Fig.176].

ii. Norwich

Work had probably begun on the choir stalls by 1410, and was continued by Bishop Wakering (1416-25) whose arms decorate a number of stalls.414 The misericord work is recognisably East Anglian, related to St Margaret King’s Lynn, Salle, and other Norfolk churches. The authoritative text on these stalls is Arthur Whittingham’s 1948 piece.415 70 misericords were manufactured under Bishop Wakering; the 35 misericords dating from Bishop Goldwell’s episcopacy are recognisably cruder.416

RC’ misericord for Richard Courtenay [Fig.177] – there is an interesting mixture of aerial/profile views in both supporters: in both cases the default is a bird’s-eye view of the scene, but elevations from both angles are included freely, for variety and emphasis: scholars sitting and reading are shown from the front, whilst a hunched scholar wearing a hat is shown from behind.417

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415 A. B. Whittingham 1948.
416 Tracy 1990, 32.
417 The misericord commemorates Bishop Richard Courtenay (1413-5) and dates from 1416-25: see Tracy 1990, 32.
**Chaos in the kitchen** [Fig.178] – a jumble of forms fit into the space of the implied cone. Notice the animals, foliage and kitchen pots which follow the upper curve of the seat, even as it becomes an overhang.

**Castle** [Fig.179] - the straightforward squishing of a castle into the rounded, twisting space available. The bulbous, compound curvature of the gatehouse is emphasised by the grid-like pointing of the brickwork, offering us a grid with which to estimate the spatial distortions at play.

### iii. St Nicholas’ King’s Lynn

**The carver at work** [Model I; Figs.180-182] – a characterful mixture of bird’s-eye view and profile. There is a swelling of space in the centre and a kind of rolling outward, with forms tipping outwards towards the viewer.418

**Cleric at prayer** [Model II; Figs.183-185] – the same bending of space is evident here, particularly in the ambiguous splaying or distortion of the prayer desk.419 Sustained attention from oblique angles [Fig.185] begins to reveal just how much compression is present in this little vignette, which at first glance [Fig.183] appears straightforward.

### iv. Whalley Abbey

The stalls date from 1418-34, and are perhaps by a provincial artist called Eatough.420 Charles Tracy describes carving of ‘mediocre quality’; the Whalley misericords lack the ‘sophistication and subtle draughtsmanship’ of those at Carlisle, for example, but make up for it with ‘clarity and a certain rustic vitality’.421

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418 Victoria and Albert Museum, object W.54-1921. See Tracy 1988 cat.78.
420 Tracy 1990, 5–8.
421 Tracy 1990, 5–8.
Shoeing a goose [Fig.186] – a dramatically curved pictorial canvas, with marked recession towards the corners. Even the taught rope at the far right-hand side of the scene is curved.

v. ‘Ripon’ school

The ‘Ripon’ school traditionally refers to loose group of related misericords from the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries, found at Beverley, Manchester, and Ripon, and elsewhere. The term has been contested but remains useful for my purposes as a way of referring to a loose group of northern misericords with spatial similarities.422

v.i Ripon misericords, c.1488 – 1494 423

Samson at the Gates of Gaza [Fig.187] – play with scale is created by a dramatic forcing of perspective into the corners of the wedge-like space: note, for example, the difference between the real lengths of the two piers of the castle gate.

v.ii Manchester misericords, c.1506 424

Boar feeding piglets [Fig.188]: the slight curvature of the scene and recession of the roof of the pig sty permit the scene to be formed into a rounded whole, underscored and emphasised by the crisp curve of the bottom edge.

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422 Purvis saw a ‘family likeness’ between the work of Ripon, Beverley, and Manchester, and attempted to support this with documentary evidence: Purvis 1936 Tracy critiques the evidence and the likelihood of this kind of intimate relationship between the monuments: Tracy 1990, 16–31. But, for my purposes, the notion of a ‘family likeness’ remains important, despite the critique of the exact nature of the relationship; Tracy does not dispute the existence of a ‘regional period style’ which goes back ultimately to earlier work at Lincoln.


424 Tracy 1990, 27.
Men at a gaming table [Fig.189]: a delicate ‘3/4 elevated’ perspective – somewhere between a plan view and an elevation, and blending elements of both. We are offered the gaming table in plan view but the twist of the axis presents the gamblers in something closer to an elevation. The scene is bent around a semi-circular path.

Bird with a baby in its nest [Fig.190]: a real *tour de force* of space growing outwards in two axes. This allows ¾ bird’s-eye views of the figures on the ground and the nest at the top of the tree to be represented together. There’s also narrative development between the two halves of the misericord, and movement is required to unpick them.

Capturing a bear [Fig.191]: the scene’s curvature results in a dramatic curving twist in the wheelbarrow. There is a compound, twisting curvature to the spars which connect the handle to the wheel. Crossing the centreline, it creates a lovely flowing composition and draws the two wedges of pictorial space together into a single sweep.

Hunting scene [Fig.192]: this triangular scene is typical of the triangular arrangements at Beverley, and exemplifies the spatial contortions required to produce them. There is a twisting, rolling effect to the way the plane modulates from one side of the ‘wedge’ to the other; particularly emphatic here because of the hunters long stride which carries him from one side of the wedge toward the centre. *Woodsmen making a fire* [Fig.193] is a more staid example of this common technique in which two pictorial axes meet, producing a larger central space.

Putting the cart before the horse [Fig.194]: the same two point ‘perspectival’ recession results in the compound twisting of the cart’s wheel.

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vi. St Georges’ Windsor: 1478-83 426

The St Georges’ stalls were made by English craftsmen, but there is Flemish influence – from Brussels and Leuven - evident in lots of the architectural detailing.427

*Death comes to a rich man* [Fig.195]: in this scene there is extremely pronounced recession of objects towards the corners; also a ‘rolling backwards’ observable at the bottom and top of the picture space. The chest on the lower right-hand side and the vessels on the upper right-hand side each curve characterfully, creating a subtle fish-eye effect which serves to make the centre of the scene more roomy and generous.

**Conclusion**

The conventional wedge-shape space offered by the misericord gave rise to a number of distinctive sculptural mannerisms in the examples surveyed. Particularly in the later fifteenth-century, at St George’s Windsor and in the Ripon ‘school’, many misericords are even more spatially ‘distortive’ than the Norwich bosses. They evidence a similar disposition toward the same broad manner/idiom, but have a different set of formal problems to solve, and also a greater sense of recession and pictorial depth: many scenes taper sharply away from the centre, creating a forced perspective reminiscent of Jean Fouquet’s most distinctive illuminations [Fig.196].

The fundamental similarity, however, is the relationship between spatial malleability and the voluntary acceptance of the constraining frame. Where the sculptor of the boss dealt with a constraining hemisphere, the misericord sculptor deals with (or makes for himself) a tapering wedge: just like the boss, this is a shape formed by convention rather than simple necessity, but it offers a pattern into which the necessary iconographical elements can be squeezed. Many of the devices used to accomplish that squeezing are

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426 Tracy 1990, 47–51. For the literature see Hope 1913, 2:429–36; Colvin 1963, 884.
common to the bosses. Splaying, twisting, and warping all feature as basic devices enabling the combination of contradictory views. Many more examples of these effects in misericords could be mustered to supplement those above: at New College Oxford one misericord [Fig.197] assembles a mixture of viewpoints to provide the best sense of a view of a city from above, reminiscent of boss W14; in an earlier misericord from Chester [Fig.198] the same device permits a pen of ducks to be shown both from outside and from above in the same composition. Evocative viewpoints are freely combined.

This has not been an exhaustive survey by any means; there are also many misericords even at the sites discussed above which do not adopt these mannerisms. Of the misericords that do, we can perhaps see a regional grouping in East Anglia toward the beginning of the fifteenth century (at Norwich, Ely, King’s Lynn, and Lincoln), and then, toward the end of the century, an increasingly diffuse spread, with pockets of virtuosity around Ripon and in London. A fuller study could hope to explore more specific vectors of influence based on the similarity of spatial treatment, much as has been done already in terms of iconography and foliage design. A study with wider scope would also need to look abroad: at the misericords in Amiens; at those in Spain considered to be of an English manner and of English craftsmanship. A great deal of work remains to be done, but, in agreement with Hugh Harrison, it ought to be stressed that the treatment of space needs to be a factor in the future analysis of misericords and choir stalls, alongside existing iconographical and technical analyses. Misericords offer an enormous corpus of late-medieval sculptural/spatial representation for analysis, and they ought to be treated as sculptural objects.

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428 For highly spatially inventive examples from Rouen and Amiens, see Block 2003, 389–96, 410–13. The ones in Barcelona Cathedral were carved in English mode by a man called ‘Pere ça Anglada’—see Binski 2014a, 272; Block 2004, 17–22.

429 H. Harrison 2009, xvii.
5.2 Brabantine sculpture

When we look beyond boss sculpture and misericord sculpture, we find that there is very little other sculpture to be found in the British Isles which employs the same vocabulary of curvature and compression. Looking abroad, however, we do find similar tactics in evidence in some stone sculpture from the Low Countries, and particularly the Brabant region, c.1440-70. The correspondence of sculptural idiom is perhaps more than just coincidental given the possibility that Netherlandish carvers were employed in East Anglia and in the Norwich cloister, as outlined in Chapter 4. In this section I do not dwell on those possible vectors of influence, but instead analyse a number of Brabantine case studies in terms of their approach to sculptural space.

Fifteenth-century stone sculpture in the Netherlands is an under-studied field. Joseph Destrée’s 1894 study of sculpture in Brabant identifies the flourishing of a ‘Brabant school’ of sculpture in wood and stone, but most scholarship since has concentrated on wooden altarpieces. There are, however, a number of surviving stone pieces which evidence a tradition of characterful narrative carving, employing varying levels of relief spread across complex curving surfaces. Chief among these survivals are the console carvings, corbels, capitals and bosses from the town halls of Leuven and Brussels. Some literature does allude to the compressive idiom employed by these sculptors: Smeyers notes how one corbel character ‘turns completely into the function of the stone; the extreme parts of his body coincide with the edges [of the block].’ As well as figural compression, these sculptors pursued deep undercutting and corresponding protrusion, making their sculptures more susceptible to erosion, but stressing ‘three-dimensionality’.

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430 Fransen 2013, 9; citing Müller, Scott, and Scott 1992, 91: ‘As yet too little has been done towards a systematic assembling and examination of the works that survive in the Netherlands and elsewhere, such as was undertaken long ago for corresponding works of painting’, and Brine 2015, 13:33: ‘In some respects the scholarship of Netherlandish sculpture seems as though it is in its infancy. The sculptural output of the Low Countries in the fifteenth century remains an under-studied field’. 
431 Fransen 2013, 9.
432 Smeyers and Dooren 1998, 121.
often achieving deep, stage-like spaces with free-standing figures freed from the constraints of conventional relief. This extreme protrusion and undercutting was made possible by the ‘Avesnes stone’ commonly used in fifteenth-century Brabantine regions, from Avesnes-le-Sec and Hordain in northern France, which is remarkably soft and workable.\footnote{Fransen 2013, 25.}

i. Brussels town hall capitals

A new wing of Brussels town hall was built in 1444–9 with ornamental sculpture (corbels and capitals) in its ground floor arcade.\footnote{The only comprehensive study of the various sculptures in context is Anagnostopoulos 2018.} Three of these capitals commemorate properties demolished in the course of construction: houses known as ‘Den Scupstoel’, ‘Papenkelder’, and ‘De Moor’. These capitals make various plays on the names of the properties; the originals survive as weathered fragments in the city museum [Fig.199] while nineteenth-century copies remain \textit{in situ}.\footnote{The originals are Musée de la Ville de Bruxelles inv. B/1934/10.} The capital known as the ‘Scupstoel’ capital, associated with the preparatory drawing now residing in the MET, provides fascinating clues as to working method as outlined in Chapter 4 [Figs.160-161]. For the purposes of this section, however, it remains to stress the extent to which the design forces the sculptor to think three dimensionally, continually varying their modelling strategy: whilst the drawing provides an abstracted cone-like shape and assumes the sculpture to be a piece of relief work, the sculpture itself is sufficiently deeply cut to offer convincing views of the figures and masses from a variety of oblique viewpoints, whilst the stools themselves are foreshortened [Fig.200]. Depths of relief are freely and erratically intermingled around the complex form.

As already discussed, Fransen suggests that in working ‘from drawing to carving’ the sculptor divided the composition into sections, putting groups of figures/objects on
each ‘face’ and adding extra stools invented to fill the empty spaces created by this grouping. We can compare this mixture of planning and extemporisation to the drawing on faces of a misericord block and the improvisation then required to connect these faces in the carving process. Minor corbels around the ground floor arcade of the town hall [Figs.201-202] are in the same ‘compressive idiom’, as are those carved nearby at the Scheut Chapel, c.1450: each figure is crouched or contorted to yield a compressed mass.

Pierre Anagnostopoulos has considered the viewing sequence implied by the minor capitals and the ways they catch and direct the eyes of the viewer. Seen sequentially, this corpus of sculpture provides an interesting parallel to the conditions of the cloister, in that the globules of sculpture point to each other, directing the eye through the circulatory space.

ii. Leuven town hall consoles

The Leuven town hall was begun in 1448 by the builder Mattheus de Layens, and its façade features over 200 elaborately figural consoles or socles. Layens travelled to Brussels to find stone carvers for the project and the consoles are probably the work of the company of Jan Schancke. They were designed, however, by the city painter Hubrecht Stuerbout (these drawings do not survive). The scheme comprises paired corbels, with a biblical ‘sin’ on the left side of each pillar and on the right its

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436 Fransen 2013, 161.
437 For the Scheut chapel see Fransen 2013, 99–107.
439 For the town hall generally, see Smeyers and Dooren 1998. For the consoles specifically see also Heirman, Staes, and Oosterlynck 1997; also Crab 1977, 63–64. On the various restorations which have occurred since construction, see Vandekerchove 1998.
440 Smeyers and Dooren 1998, 122.
corresponding punishment. In each console the sculptor fits his scene into the space created beneath the shelf or bracket on which the main sculpture sits: the support for this bracket, much like a misericord, is essentially a tapering wedge or inverted pyramid, with a front face and two side-faces at 45 degrees. Stuerbout (or the sculptors themselves) employed a range of spatial devices to make the scenes conform to this challenging canvas. The case studies selected below offer a sample of the most striking distortions.

David leaves triumphant from Jerusalem [Fig.203] - this console displays the characteristic juxtaposition of multiple contradictory points of view in close proximity. The gatehouse is ‘tipped forward’ and presents a face perpendicular to the viewer; meanwhile the ground within the gate is similarly raked to provide a foreshortening effect, implying space behind the gatehouse. To either side, the battlements bend downwards (relative to the gatehouse) to conform to the edge of the socle: the contrast between their perspective and that of the gatehouse is made evident by the figures who lean out over the battlements. We as viewers understand that they are craning to see David, but in fact they cannot see him from their vantage point, unless we agree that we are being shown multiple pockets of a fictive, malleable space. The same effect is at work in the battle scene [Fig.204]: the horizontal ground and the vertical walls are both rendered on the same plane, perpendicular to the viewer’s gaze (the wounded man, left hand side, who lies on the ground with arrows around him, and his friend who stands nearby providing covering fire, are both rendered on roughly the same axis).

God and his angels [Fig.205] - in this corbel we see the familiar device of a number of individual forms being massed together to form a pleasing, near spherical whole. Bodies conform to the curvature of the block and faces are arranged to find gaps in the crowd. The same is true in the frenetic battle scene [Fig.206].
\textit{Cain denies his crime in court} [Fig.207] - this resembles the King’s Lynn misericords [Figs.180-185] in its division of the horizontal axis of the scene into two halves, one each side of a central swelling.

\textit{Aaron makes a sin offering} [Fig.208] – here there is a slight splaying of solids: the top of the altar and its front, which we understand to be perpendicular, are ‘splayed’ in order to show both at once.

\textit{The chaste Suzanna} [Fig.209] – here is another example of contradictory angles combined: we see the top and sides of the trough by which Susanna sits, both rendered in much the same plane as her standing interlocutor.

\textit{Construction of the temple in Solomon’s House} [Fig.210] – there are two key devices here: firstly, the free combination of different scales: the central figures are on a very different scale to the minor characters who peer from the similarly diminutive buildings. Secondly, the way that multiple ‘parallel’ lines are brought towards each other in a regular way, lending the composition a tapering effect towards the bottom, in line with the console’s basic shape. The various architectural facades therefore ‘splay’ outwards at the top, but each is perpendicular to the gaze of an oblique viewer.

\textit{Elijah throws himself upon the child} [Fig.211] - here we see the free and strange combination of relief depths. The chair and roof of the space are both foreshortened and represented in low relief in a kind of pseudo-linear perspective, whilst the extra space at the side of the console permits the rendering of the crowd in full relief.

\textbf{iii. Leuven registry room bosses}

In 1460 Joes Beyaert took over the task of producing the sculptural decoration of the town hall, and in 1466-1467 was charged with the execution of five round, historiated
wooden bosses for the ‘reception’ or ‘registry’ room in the ‘end house’. These employ a remarkably similar approach to that of the Norwich ‘school’ of carvers, though with some important differences: where the Norfolk designers conceived of the boss’ downward ‘face’ as its dominant surface and then extend the design to the ‘sides’ as a secondary concern, these Leuven designs work in the opposite way, focusing on the treatment of the ‘sides’ of a roughly conical boss and choosing not to treat the bottom face, which instead terminates in a rosette. They are therefore most like the Scupstoel capital in terms of their available space, which can be thought of as an inverted and truncated cone. They employ a similar sculptural language within this space, because of the need to wrap each narrative scene around a curving form. It seems very likely that a ‘collar’ of preparatory drawing like the surviving Scupstoel drawing could have been used to think through these designs.

Maurits Smeyers has shown the iconography of these bosses to rely heavily on the then-recently published Biblia Pauperum. Indeed, there are many correspondences, both in the choice of scenes and, as Smeyers notes, ‘their way of thinking of some characters’. Once again, however, it is necessary to question the extent to which this ought to be thought of as a ‘strong dependence’ given the formal invention necessary to transform the scenes from the Biblia’s tall, narrow woodcuts, to the bosses’ broad, conical canvas. Even where individual figures or iconographical elements are borrowed, they are dramatically recast in three dimensions, distributed across the conical boss. The boss of Samson with the gates of Gaza/Jonah and the whale [Figs.212-3] achieves a convincing bulk and sense of space within the block’s constraints. Samson’s form is, helpfully, wider at the top than at the bottom (even in its Biblia Pauperum version [Fig.214]) since he carries the gates across his shoulders. It was necessary, however, for the boss cutter to place Gaza behind him and a sweeping hill in front of him, rather than have both

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442 Smeyers and Dooren 1998, 176. The corbels of the original ‘zaal’, on the theme of the Life of Mary, Childhood of Jesus and the Passion, would be interesting to examine but these were all replaced in 1890: Smeyers and Dooren 1998, 186–87.
recede into the distance as in the Biblia. On the boss, these landscape features sweep and tip away from Samson dramatically, making little sense when viewed obliquely but coming into focus as we mimic Samson’s journey around the scene. Another boss, of the three Marys at the tomb and the Resurrection, likewise plays with the spectator’s movement, revealing the surprise of the Resurrection as the spectator rounds the boss [Figs.215-216]. The tomb is less wildly distorted than the bosses at Hethersett or St Giles, but the scene has still been cleverly manipulated to taper towards the bottom.

These registry room bosses are therefore close cousins of the Norwich bosses, because of their inventive redistribution of existing iconographies and their play with spectator movement. In their switching of focus from the lower face to the sides of the boss they represent a natural development of the trajectory observed in East Anglia, where sculptors took increasing care to offer interest from oblique viewpoints. And as with the Norwich bosses and with Ripon school of misericords, the fact that manuscript or block-book sources may have inspired elements of each design the design does not constitute a full explanation of how they were made: instead we must draw inferences both from the ‘Scuustoel’ drawing and from the expertise of carvers such as Hugh Harrison, and posit intermediary stages of two dimensional drawing, bozzetto modelling, drawing onto a rough-cut block, and skilled mental visualisation which developed in tandem with the emerging three dimensional design.

The examples I have mentioned by no means exhaust the potential for the study of these devices in Brabantine sculpture.444 A further series of five bosses in the Leuven Registry room, for example, most of which are unpublished, are even closer matches for the Norwich aesthetic: they show financial activities relevant to the work of the city’s accountants, and manipulate their constituent parts within a spherical frame [Fig.225].445 Further investigation into these bosses could strengthen the proposed connection

444 See the corbels of St Gregory, St Jerome and St Ambrose, before 1409, in Halle, St Martin’s Church. Here the staff curves with the stone: Fransen 2013, 99–107.
445 Crab 1977, 176.
between the East Anglian and Brabantine sculptural traditions. But even this brief survey has provided evidence for a certain family likeness between the inventiveness of the Norwich boss sculptors and their Netherlandish counterparts.

5.3 **Boxwood prayer beads**

Boxwood prayer beads, sometimes called ‘prayer nuts’ or *paternasters*, were uniquely produced in the Netherlands in the early sixteenth century. The 2017 ‘Small Wonders’ research project and exhibition and its associated publications represents the most up-to-date research on these boxwood pieces. Here I draw on this new research, and do not intend to rehearse its findings but rather to use them to draw comparisons between the boxwood prayer beads and the other sculptural objects I have been analysing.

In many ways these prayer beads are unlike our bosses: the bosses are large, stone, convex and embedded in vaults; the beads are small (c.40-70mm in diameter), wooden, comprise two concave hemispheres and are portable and manipulable. Nonetheless, certain similarities make them worthy objects of comparison: they share with the late bosses ‘a craving for detail that testifies to a certain *horror vacui*, but also […] a spatial approach to stage management […] along sight lines through vistas.’ They tend to reject spatial regularity in favour of pictorial complexity within a small, circular compass. Like the bosses, they are emphatically three-dimensional, playing with protrusion and recession in the expectation of being subjected to sustained attention. Admittedly a viewer must move around the bosses, whilst they can rotate the prayer nut in front of them - but both situations involve a comparable shifting of the angle of incidence between the subject’s gaze and the object. In Chapter 6 I will consider how this similarity might encourage us to consider a meditative, prayerful mode of viewing for

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446 Williamson 2002, 107, 140–49.
447 Scholten 2017; further research published online at http://boxwood.ago.ca. For important earlier studies of the material: Os 1994; Scholten 2017.
448 Scholten 2017, 27.
our bosses. Here, however, I focus on their formal similarity, and what they suggest about the techniques employed in the bosses’ manufacture.

The majority of these distinctive prayer nuts originated from one single skilled workshop, nominally the ‘Adam Dircksz workshop’: this shop was likely active 1500-1530, with its heyday 1510 to 1525.449 This tradition begins, then, almost a century later than our bosses: but rather than emerging in 1500 ex nihilo, Frits Scholten stresses that the Dircksz shop’s practice was rooted in the fifteenth-century sculptural traditions of the low countries: large altarpieces with complex decorations provided a ‘fertile breeding ground’ for this micro-art.450 As with the bosses, then, we have a situation in which a focussed period of labour by a small group of craftsmen, in an ‘inventive and innovative environment’, permitted rapid stylistic development, transforming an existing tradition and pushing it in new directions. And, as with the bosses, the Dircksz prayer nuts also spawned some sub-standard imitations, which borrowed heavily from the composition and idiom of the originals but were technically cruder.451

Pete Dandridge and Lisa Ellis describe the likely techniques employed by the Dircksz workshop.452 Whilst the beads are designed to appear to be carved in a single piece of boxwood, they were in fact often planned and cut as distinct layers, from separate pieces of wood: background, foreground, and middleground each slotted into a traceryed ‘shell’ by a system of grooves and pegs. These multiple ‘plaques’ build up the depth of scenes like theatrical ‘scrims’, creating a more obvious graduation between a background (in low relief) and various mid and foreground elements (in increasingly high relief), and enabling very fragile elements to appear as if completely undercut. This spatial gradation

449 The scholars who examined the ‘prayer nuts’ for the ‘Small Wonders’ exhibition reinstated this previously discredited hypothesis: see Scholten 2017, 27.
450 Scholten 2017, 48–31, 570. The actual tools and techniques of carving were almost identical to those developed for the production of large-scale altarpieces, but to carry them out with precision at such a small scale required both the manufacture of downscale tools and the use of magnification.
451 Scholten 2017, 52.
452 Scholten 2017, 514–79.
in pursuit of extreme depth perhaps reflects local developments in linear perspective in the later fifteenth century. This composite quality represents a marked point of difference between the prayer nuts and the bosses.

The tracery on the convex ‘outside’ surfaces of the beads was worked out on the pre-cut surface of the basic block, by dividing the hemisphere initially into six or eight segments, with possible subdivisions into twelve or sixteen parts.\textsuperscript{453} Tracery was generally worked out from the middle outwards: this accounts for the occasional inaccuracies or muddles toward the edges, and mimics the way in which the carvers of the bosses and the Scupstoel capital both began with key elements of their composition, often those in the centre, and became increasingly improvisatory at the penumbra of each ‘spotlight’ of narrative focus.\textsuperscript{454}

The Dircksz workshop used various sources for their compositions: model books, prints, tapestries, paintings, altarpieces – but (as already stressed in the case of the Leuven bosses and the Ripon misericords) the change of scale and format necessitated drastic alteration.\textsuperscript{455}

The typical palette of spatial techniques employed by the Dircks workshop includes a mixture of devices, which I will ‘parse’ below with reference to case studies.

First, we see a consistent \textit{stress on the centre of the picture space} with increasing diminution, compression, distortion and reduction in scale towards the fringes. Sometimes this is aided by an architectural device, such as the chancel vault which follows the curvature of the bead [Fig.217]. Other times it is achieved by the distribution of figures: in one scene of \textit{The Expulsion of the Money Changers from the Temple} [Fig.218] the spacious centre

\textsuperscript{453} Scholten 2017, 534.
\textsuperscript{454} Scholten 2017, 537–42.
\textsuperscript{455} Scholten 2017, 518.
brings our attention to Christ with the whip and the beautifully carved birdcage, while the fringes are pointedly chaotic.

Secondly, and not unrelatedly, we find a generally *flexible treatment of imaginary space*; a willingness to combine and layer different pockets of imagined space without heed as to the correspondence of their scale, axes, or structural characteristics with neighbouring pockets. See for example the way shepherds perch on a ‘shelf’ of hillside in *The Nativity* [Fig.219]. The free combination of different scales occurs for different reasons within a single scene [Fig.220]: sometimes in order to force perspective (behind Christ carrying the cross); and other times for economy (fitting a figure into the turret); or for emphasis (compare Simon of Syrene with the less important figures around him).

Thirdly, in passages of low relief [Fig.221] we often find the now-familiar *combination of viewpoints* used to ‘show more’ or show more clearly: here we see a dinner scene rendered in a consistent perspective, interrupted by a dinner plate which is resolutely rendered in plan view. This is of course an extension of a flexible treatment of space, but in such instances it becomes an idiom in itself, a deliberate inaccuracy used to ‘show more’.

Fourthly, the ‘prayer nuts’ were sometimes *strung together in groups* resembling rosaries, prompting sequential viewing. See, for example, the boxwood rosary of the Dutch nobleman Floris van Egmond [Fig.224], which, like the chains of bosses in the Norwich vault, offers a succession of complex objects to be revolved in prayerful contemplation.

Finally, in some boxwood productions we find a familiar *‘wrapping’ of scenes around curving forms*: see for example the altarpiece-tryptych with Last Supper scene [Fig.222], where the table of the last supper is curved through 180 degrees around the object’s base. This might be compared to the way scenes are crammed into the junctions of ribs in another similar tabernacle [Fig.223]: the available space dictates not just the arrangement of the figures and forms, but also the layout of the entire scene and its constituent parts.
With reference to Chapter 2.2, then, it seems that the prayer beads, along with the misericords and Leuven socles, presented the carver with a loosely similar set of representational challenges to the bosses, straddling ‘pictorial’ and ‘sculptural’ approaches to representation and viewing. The formal similarity between their solutions can be perhaps be explained by broadly familial relationship between Netherlandish and East Anglian figurative carving in the fifteenth century in the first instance, and by the emergence of the boxwood genre in the sixteenth century from the tradition, techniques, and idiom developed in the Brabant in the fifteenth.

Conclusion

This chapter has limited its comparison to three types of sculptural products reasonably close in time and place to the bosses themselves. These same representational challenges, however, have arisen wherever artists have attempted figurative, three-dimensional decoration on curving surfaces or within restricted spaces which will be viewed from multiple points. A much fuller investigation of artists’ solutions to such problems might begin by assembling a corpus of portable objects, such as gaming pieces and knife handles, which compress figures in order to constitute their form, or which wrap scenes around circular objects, encouraging the viewer to turn and manipulate them to reveal their full narratives. Even a cursory survey, beginning with this chapter’s case studies, reveals a wealth of material which is semi-pictorial, semi-sculptural, irregular in its approach to foreshortening and compression, creating sculptural space which is anisotropic and which rewards a mobile viewer with unexpected discoveries. The ‘stakes’ of this thesis’ investigation, therefore, are much greater than a monographic study of boss sculpture: this heterodox language of visual representation, widely evident in late-medieval artefacts, requires further study.

456 For example, the carved knife handle, London: British Museum inv. no. 1925,0507.1; or the mysterious sixteenth-century German spherical object, London: Victoria and Albert Museum inv. no. A.50-1953.
Part 2 of this thesis has dealt with issues of facture. It has been possible to establish a much clearer picture of the way the bosses – and other similar artefacts – were produced than has previously existed. The use of ‘unwrapped’ preparatory drawings, clay modelling, and drawing direct onto roughed-out blocks can all be offered as possible explanations for the relationship between surface complexity and spatial extension in the bosses. The bosses can be read as one example among many in a rich tradition of complex micro-sculpture, thriving in fifteenth-century East Anglia with potential links to Netherlandish workshops, and with resonances across England and northern Europe. They can be seen to evince an increasing demand for specialist sculptors or gravours, who travelled widely and were well paid. But this investigation has also brought some problems and ambiguities into the foreground: what, for example, can be done to flesh out a historical notion of the ‘innate three-dimensional imaging ability’ which allowed gravours to devise such complex forms, perhaps with no bozzetto model or maquette? And what qualities were considered desirable in a sculpture by makers and viewers, beyond the mere demonstration that the sculptor is skilful (capiens)?

The final part of this thesis – Part 3 – pursues these questions, attempting to offer a speculative ‘reception study’, seeking period notions (Chapter 6) which might inform a less anachronistic reading of this sculptural idiom, and finally returning to the questions of anisotropic projection and pictorial space (Chapter 7) raised here, seeking period-sensitive ways of interpreting these phenomena.
Chapter 6 Towards an historicist reading of the idiom

What are we to make of this distinctive sculptural mode when it is employed in the specific historical context of the monastic cloister? How and when might the Norwich Benedictines have engaged with the bosses, and what sources might enable us to reconstruct something of their original ‘reception’? And how are we to interpret the same idiom when it is used elsewhere, outside the cathedral precinct? This chapter shifts the discussion towards these interpretive questions.

6.1 The monastic context

First, I summarise and discuss what is known of the monastic context for which the cloister bosses were made and in which they were viewed.

Use of the cloister

The Benedictine Priory at Norwich Cathedral was a large community, numbering around 50-60 monks throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The daily customs of the community were originally adopted from Fécamp, Herbert de Losinga’s alma mater. Despite slippages in the fifteenth century of the rigour with which customs were observed, the broad rhythms of daily life required by their Rule remained unchanged. The monastic day was organised around the many offices sung in the

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459 On the Norwich visitations see Knowles 1948a, 3:73–75. By the 1490s the Norwich monastery seems to have become decadent. Against this see Luxford 2012, 206 on continued Benedictine commitment in the fifteenth century.
cathedral choir. Between these there were periods of time for sleeping (in the dormitory) and eating (in the refectory); the remainder of the monk’s day would be taken up either with administrative business (relating to the various obedientiary offices of hosteller, gardener, communar, pittancer, etc.), or with reading and prayer.

The cloister was the geographical centre of the life of the priory. Its walkways were the principle thoroughfares between dormitory, cathedral choir, chapterhouse, refectory, and guest house, both for informal movement throughout the monastic day and for liturgical processions. Reading and prayer both took place in the cloister; books were stored there in armaria, and there were perhaps even dedicated study spaces or carrels. Silence was generally expected, although periods of conversation were permitted. More mundane activities took place there too, such as the daily ablutions of the monks at the lavatorium, the weekly mandatum fratrum (ritual washing of the feet), the drying of towels, and the weekly tonsuring of the monks’ hair. The bosses loomed above while all of this activity took place: they could have drawn passing glances from monks going about their business, or rewarded more sustained contemplation in idle moments and focussed periods of reading or meditation.

Reading

Until the late fourteenth century books were stored in the cloister in dedicated cupboards; after this, the majority were stored in a library, but the cloister continued to

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460 Harper-Bill 2004, 83. Offices were Vigils (Matins), Lauds, Mass, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline. Bishop Salmon (in 1309) required that at least two-thirds of the monks would be in the choir for each service; this had not always been the case given other time-consuming tasks.

461 Gilchrist 2005, 77.

462 Gilchrist 2005, 12–13. Talking ‘on business’ (ie. general conversation) was permitted in a part of the cloister in certain hours of the morning; on Sundays and feast days any extra time available was spent reading. Knowles 1948b, 1:283; Tolhurst 1948, xxiv.

463 Gilchrist 2005, 92.
be a space for reading and reflection. It has even been proposed that there was a semi-permanent 'school' set up in the cloister, but this not certain. The north walk, being the warmest, has been suggested as a possible location for study spaces (carrels), or even as a reserved space for older monks, but this is conjectural.

A monk’s reading was fuel for his meditation and spiritual growth. Norwich was a particularly intellectual institution, with a strong tradition of university attendance amongst its monks: Prior Henry Lakenham was influential in the founding of Gloucester College Oxford in 1291, and from then until 1450 at least two monks were away studying at any one time, reading for degrees and studying theology. Returning to Norwich, educated monks assumed preaching responsibilities, and may have had teaching duties in the monastery.

The contents of the library at Norwich have been partially reconstructed by Ker, who was able to trace 107 books of a likely total of 600. Even if more of the library were traceable, there remains the fact that a library does not represent the sum of an institution’s intellectual landscape. Away at Oxford, for example, monk-students such as Adam Easton could have been exposed to broad range of texts and ideas: those books recorded as residing at Norwich are therefore only a fraction of a fraction of those

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464 Book cupboards (armaria) are still visible in the east and south walks; they are of fourteenth-century date, accounted for in 1329-30. Others date from the Romanesque cloister and were merely refaced in the rebuilding. See Dodwell 1996, 232–33; Gilchrist 2005, 90–92. The cloister only served as the library until the later fourteenth century: see Gilchrist 2005, 256.

465 This is based on notes in the communar’s rolls about upkeep of desks, doors and lockers in the cloister: see R. H. Harries, Cattermole, and Mackintosh 1991, 5.

466 Gilchrist 2005, 92. Nichols asserts that ‘the ‘sun-catching’ north walk was ‘reserved for the older monks’, but cites no evidence: Nicholls 1999, 6.


468 Dodwell 1996, 244–47; Pantin 1937, 3:28–29. Adam Easton, for example, was asked to remain at Norwich in order to preach rather than go back to Oxford. On teaching, see Greatrex 1991, 562.

469 Ker 1949; following James 1915.
which might have influenced the brothers’ thought. Whilst Ker’s list cannot therefore serve to reconstruct a notion of which texts may and may not have influenced the monks, it does give a few indicative hints. Following the fire in 1272, books donated to the library in the first few decades included Vincent de Beauvais, Hugh of St Victor, Augustine, Isidore of Seville, Bonaventure, and Hugh Folieto (discussed below): this spread is consistent with David Knowles’ assessment of the Benedictine milieu as being rooted in a conservative education with only occasional influence from more contemporary sources.\footnote{Ker 1949, 7; Knowles 1948c, 2:219. Dodwell agrees that the books owned by the library show a strong interest in historical works, in keeping with the Benedictine tradition: Dodwell 1996, 336.}

**Processions**

As well as being the monastery’s principal circulatory route and a space for reading and prayer, the cloister was also a liturgical space, used for processions on Sundays and on Feast days.\footnote{Gilchrist 2005, 81; Dodwell 1996, 234–36.} Roberta Gilchrist (and, following her, Veronica Sekules) has argued that there are close links between the distribution of the bosses and the direction of travel taken by monks in processions.\footnote{Gilchrist 2005, 88, 254; Sekules 2006, 290–91.} She sees the Prior’s door as the ‘pivotal point’ in an holistic scheme; from here the standard processional route proceeded clockwise from the Prior’s Door to the north/west door into the nave; according to her, ‘the apocalypse bosses are carefully orchestrated to lead the narrative back into the cathedral church: the church completes the apocalypse cycle, representing the emergence of the heavenly Jerusalem’.\footnote{Gilchrist 2005, 88; citing Tolhurst 1948, xxiv–v for the routes.} There are, however, a number of problems with this ambitious interpretation (aside from the inherent reductivism of such functionalist arguments).

First, the bosses do not exactly follow the described processional route. Beginning at the Prior’s door and heading south means starting half way through Christ’s Passion and
working backwards through it to reach a group of foliate bosses, before picking up the Apocalypse cycle in the south-east corner.\textsuperscript{474} Gilchrist makes other implausible claims for liturgical links: she makes the argument that because of the ‘Three Marys at the Tomb’ boss at NA2, the north walk might have been central to Easter liturgies: yet this boss is only one within a highly varied sequence, and no other evidence is forthcoming.\textsuperscript{475}

Secondly, Gilchrist and Sekules both acknowledge that the majority of bosses in any given sequence are turned the wrong way for the direction of travel in a procession: the narrative moves south-north following the procession, for example, but the boss scenes greet a viewer approaching north-south. Monks, carefully spaced with four to five paces between them, would have had little chance to dawdle or engage in the looping, iterative viewing which this aspect of the bosses’ placement seems to invite.\textsuperscript{476} The orientation of the bosses, Gilchrist admits, prevents their easy comprehension when processing narrative: instead she offers that ‘the bosses were intended to stimulate memory and spiritual meditation, and they were aligned for convenient study during routine use of the cloister’.\textsuperscript{477} It seems we are therefore encouraged to disregard her earlier argument for processional choreography. Some suggestions of ways in which bosses emphasise certain thresholds remain plausible: Adam and Eve are positioned over the refectory, for example, cautioning against gluttony.\textsuperscript{478}

Gilchrist’s desire to connect the bosses to liturgical patterns stems from her conviction that the bosses must be more than simply decorative. She suggests that the cloister could have functioned as a ‘cognitive machine’: many mnemonic methods suggest the association of knowledge with imagined architectural space.\textsuperscript{479} I remain sceptical about

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{474} Gilchrist 2005, 89; this passage is confusing.
\item \textsuperscript{475} Gilchrist 2005, 89.
\item \textsuperscript{476} Chadd 1996, 319.
\item \textsuperscript{477} Gilchrist 2005, 89.
\item \textsuperscript{478} Gilchrist 2005, 89; citing Rose 1996, 367.
\item \textsuperscript{479} Gilchrist 2005, 254.
\end{itemize}
the extent to which the narrative sequences of bosses offered ‘a cognitive map of the liturgy’ (given the lack of any real liturgical correspondence) but I can support the idea that the Apocalypse cycle might have gained power from its ‘locational setting that could be visited and contemplated’. It is possible that the sculpture adorning the earlier Romanesque cloister had provided similar mnemonic opportunities, recalling scenes and subjects from curriculum authors. In remembering the episodes of Christian history and eschatology, it seems natural that a monk schooled in rhetorical tactics for spatial remembering would have summoned a mental map of the cloister bosses as an aide memoire and a basis for meditation.

At Norwich specifically there is good evidence to support the idea that the monks would have been ready to see the fabric of their monastery as a meditative object. When the library was being restocked in the early-fourteenth century, one of the first books to be donated, by Prior Henry Lakenham, was Hugh Folieto’s *De Claustro Anime*. Hugh describes a spiritual cloister built by the regular contemplative practice of the soul: it has four walks (contempt of self, contempt of world, love of God, love of neighbour), and Hugh allegorises not only the many columns which support each walk, but also the other buildings of the monastery, associating each with a faculty or quality of the soul. Hugh’s description aimed to add an additional meditative dimension to the daily motion of monks through a monastery, and offered them a way of remembering formulae and lists of spiritual attitudes. That the text was owned by Lakenham (who began the Gothic cloister) and available in the cloister thereafter suggests that Norwich monks could have thought of their cloister in such terms. It would not be plausible to tie the boss sculpture into this interpretation too exactly, but it does suggest (in accordance with

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480 Gilchrist 2005, 255; following Carruthers 2003, 80.
481 Jill Franklin suggests they might have helped the boys of the school learn the classical myths part of their education, though it is uncertain how the capitals were arranged: Franklin 1996, 134.
482 Ker 1949, 14. For the manuscript see Binski and Zutshi 2011, 123. On the text (PL 176, col.1019) see Whitehead 1998; Laemers 2005; Pinder 2010. The association with Norwich is mentioned in Binski 2014b, 112.
Gilchrist) that the monks were alive to the idea of calling up a mental cloister for meditative purposes. I want to extend Gilchrist’s discussion of spatial issues, however, to consider not only the patterning of bosses through the cloister but also the way forms are modelled and arranged within each boss.

6.2 The ‘period eye’

This thesis has continually tried to draw attention back to the issue of sculptural style, remembering that the bosses exist in three dimensions in a distinctive formal idiom. Thus I have an ambition to find authentic ways of interpreting not only the bosses’ distribution within the cloister, but also the way forms and figures are distributed within their hemispheres. I borrow Michael Baxandall’s notion of the ‘period eye’, and seek terms and concepts ‘authentic at least to the general visual experience of the period, so as to be able to close a little more with the sculpture’.483 Loosely following Baxandall’s method I ‘cast around for apt terms’ in the culture of the period which might help to reconstruct something of the visual sensibility of their intended audiences. In the case of this sculptural idiom, these audiences are plural and nebulous.

6.2.1 Monastic concepts

In this search for authentic ways of interpreting the bosses’ particular idiom it seems natural to begin with the mental habits of their primary audience before zooming out to consider more general factors. What kinds of concepts or comparisons might a Benedictine monk have reached for when pondering the newly carved bosses? In this I explore a number of analogies, drawn from contemplative rhetorical-aesthetic discourse, which might shed light on a monastic reading of this sculptural idiom.

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The cloister was the space in which monks prayed, read, and meditated, and these spiritual procedures could have set the tone for the way they examined the sculpture, too. If the cloister is to be thought of (as it is in the Rule of St Benedict) as the ‘workshop’ in which a monk learns the ‘tools of the spiritual craft’ then we can expect monks to have engaged with the bosses using those same spiritual tools.\textsuperscript{484} The craft of meditation is first and foremost a craft of making new thoughts from old thoughts; it borrows from classical rhetoric a set of procedures for dealing with ‘materia’, stuff.\textsuperscript{485} It offers strategies for the productive recombination of known parts; for finding new ways of seeing familiar things, by inverting, zooming in, transforming, and reimagining. It gave the monks a language for analysing formal operations, and some of these operations seem applicable by analogy to the idiom in question. My proposal is twofold: first, that the bosses might have seemed like products of formal meditation, in the sense that they reorganise standard material to make new forms; second, that the finished bosses offer stimuli for further contemplation - opportunities both for drawing comparisons between scenes and for sustained consideration of individual scenes, which could be turned over and over in the mind, like pearls or jewels gleaned from reading.\textsuperscript{486}

\textit{Amplification/abbreviation}

A key observation made in Chapter 2 was that the boss sculptures in the north and west walks treat their material differently to those in the east and south aisles: the former exhibit complex crowd scenes, cramming figures and objects into a small circumference; the latter prefer simple subjects, often setting minimal elements within foliate halos. The distinction is not absolute (there are complex early bosses and simple late bosses) but

\textsuperscript{484} Nicholls 1999, 6.
\textsuperscript{485} Carruthers 2003, 60.
\textsuperscript{486} On fifteenth- and sixteenth-century habits of revolving miniature sculptural objects in prayer, see Perkinson 2017, 13–18. Saint Bernard, famously, saw that carved scenes could draw the eye: ‘it is more pleasant to read the marble than the books, and to spend the whole day marvelling over these things rather than meditating on the law of God’: St Bernard of Clairvaux, \textit{Apologia}, Chapter 12, 28-9. On monastic reading as treasure-gathering, see Carruthers 1990, 246–47.
there is a trend: the earlier bosses reduce scenes to the briefest possible expression, while the later bosses are full of copious detail. I want to suggest that these different approaches to composition would have been familiar to the monks, analogous to the paired strategies of ‘amplificatio’ and ‘abbrevatio’ which shaped their meditation.

In monastic discourse from the late eleventh century onwards, ‘abbreviation’ and ‘amplification’ were seen as two opposite but related methods for dealing with material, both in composition (rhetorical or poetic) and in meditative reflection (itself understood as a kind of composition). The ancient tropes of brevitas and copia, features of style in classical rhetoric, had evolved to become self-conscious tropes of invention. In a didactic context, the task of communicating something memorably had long been understood to rely on its being compressed or divided up into the briefest possible chunks, like tiny mustard seeds; the task of recalling or meditating upon something then required its amplification, its growth from a brief mustard seed into a great tree of knowledge. Augustine stressed the power of brief summaries, and their potential for subsequent imaginative expansion:

‘having grasped them all as a whole in summary [summatim] and essential terms, we can select certain things as being more worthy to be examined closely … dwelling on it a piece at a time as though to loosen it up and expand it, one should offer it for inspection and wonder [miranda] by the minds of the audience.’

‘Loosening up’ and ‘expanding’ seems a good description of the formal method employed in later bosses: they ‘dwell’ on their material, dilating the forms, and in so

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487 Carruthers 2003, 2; for the amplification/abbreviation dichotomy see Curtius 2013, 487–94.
488 The theme does have some antique roots: in Quintilian’s De Oratore, for example, the process ‘amplificare vel minuere’ is explained: the orator must know how to present great things as small and small things as great: to raise acts and traits above their real dimensions (VIII, 4.1). See Curtius 2013, 492.
489 Carruthers 2003, 63–64.
490 For this passage see Carruthers 2003, 152.
doing they create occasions for wonder (miranda) – whereas their antecedents are brief, compressed summaries. Thus the earlier bosses are like mustard seeds awaiting germination in the mind, whereas the complex later bosses are like swelling, dilated seeds undergoing growth: the product of amplification by their designers, which themselves are the seeds for further meditation and imaginary expansion by their viewers. 491

As well as being useful methods in the schoolroom and the monk’s cell, twelfth and thirteenth-century poetic treatises describe how a poet, too, faced a choice between these two procedures when composing: he either dispatched his subject as briefly as possible or he ingeniously drew out his subject by dilatatio. 492 According to Geoffrey of Vinsauf, both were valid ways of working the material in hand (though he seems to prefer the amplificatory mode). 493 For a poet, amplification required a toolbox of devices: varied restatement, circumlocution, comparisons both overt and obscure, personification, synecdoche, hyperbole, apostrophe: tools which enabled a plentiful harvest from a tiny seed. 494 The method which produced the later sculptures likewise sought opportunities for variation, copiousness of detail, and exaggeration. This ‘amplification’ took place within a fixed circumference (as described in Chapters 2 and 4), and so created a multum in parvo effect, a kind of copia, or fullness. Arthur Gardner derided this, but we ought to read it as being indicative of (rather than contrary to) period taste. 495

491 See Carruthers 2003, 69, for how art in churches was fodder for the contemplative who needed a hook upon which to hang his remembering.
492 Curtius 2013, 490.
493 Vinsauf 2010; see lines 203-218 for a comparison of the two strategies; then lines 219-689 on amplification and 690-736 on abbreviation.
494 Vinsauf 2010, 231.689.
495 Curtius was likewise derisive of the polarisation of amplification and abbreviation: he saw it as a hallmark of the later period when ‘the powerful stream of medieval Latin poetry began to silt up’: Curtius 2013, 492.
Abbreviation, on the other hand, uses skilful implication, emphasis, a fusion of many concepts in one ‘so that many may be seen by a single glance of the mind’. The simplest bosses of the east walk function in this way, as compressed ‘epitomes’ of their subjects. It seems unlikely that the sculptors thought in terms of ‘abbreviation’ and ‘amplification’, but the bosses might have been imagined in such terms by the monks who were schooled in such techniques.

In meditative contemplation artifice and ornament serve as waymarkers, giving the thinker reason to pause and untangle knotty problems before proceeding. Literary ornament - strangeness, exaggeration (hyperbole, litotes), pattern (chiasmus, tropes of repetition various rhythmic and rhyming patterns), brevity (ellipsis, synecdoche) and copiousness (amplification) - were all understood to help the recollection of the mind; witty puns warmed up a reader and got their meditative juices flowing. Such techniques were playful and surprising ways of directing the reader’s thought along a certain path.

I draw attention to these lists of artful tropes because it seems that the bosses’ formal language ought to be seen (and could have been seen by the monks) as a sculptural equivalent of this wrought, punning, ‘artful’ approach to composition. These bosses offer a sculptural equivalent of playful poetic ‘conceits’, using a language of compression, inversion, curvature, bending, and dilating. See, for example, the mirroring effect which occurs casually in two bosses of c.1425, NJ7, NI6: a kind of loose chiasmus. It seems what we are dealing with in the sculpture is equivalent to what Curtius broadly called ‘mannerism’ in poetic style: the complementary phenomenon to

496 Vinsauf 2010, 40 l.690.
497 Carruthers 2003, 117. In a meditative composition, the ‘stations’ (points along a route of ductus) are marked by stylistic ornament: all figurative language can function in this way, but the ‘difficult tropes’ of the bible were particularly important, what Augustine called obscuritas utilis et salubris, ‘productive and health-giving difficulty’.
498 Carruthers 2003, 18, 164.
‘classicism’, Curtius believed mannerism to span all periods of European literature; he preferred the term to ‘baroque’ but believed it to be the same phenomenon:

‘the mannerist wants to say things not normally but abnormally. He prefers the artificial and affected to the natural. He wants to surprise, to astonish, to dazzle. There is only one way of saying things naturally but there are a thousand forms of unnaturalness… hence it is shortsighted and useless to reduce mannerism to a system, as has been done again and again.’

Ductus

Within copiousness and artful conceit, however, there ought to emerge ‘ductus’, a way through. In the bosses there are two types of ductus. There are routes between bosses: they are linked in catenae, like rosaries, strung together across a vault for use in repetitive and patterned meditation (for example, the long chain of Apocalypse scenes running from bay SA to WK, or the progression from the Passion into related martyrdoms running from bay EE to NK). This ‘rosary’ metaphor finds a nice echo in the finely carved rosary beads in boss WG3 which rhyme with the spherical rounds of the bosses themselves. Within individual bosses there sometimes are routes between sub-scenes (NG4, NE2). Combined, these two forms of ductus create a looping, iterative route, encouraging the orbiting of individual bosses within the chains of linked scenes, rather like the looping shape of repetitive, meditative thought.

Varietas

It is important to note the very general medieval aesthetic preference for variety and variegation, varietas, which was a hallmark of much medieval thinking and writing about

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499 Curtius 2013, 273–82.
500 For a comparable historiated rosary see Marks, Williamson, and Townsend 2003, 343.
beauty.\textsuperscript{501} ‘Mixture’ had negative connotations in antiquity, but began to be more valued in the early middle ages as part of a preference for paradox over resolution and complexity over simplicity, reflecting the strange conceptual mixture of the Incarnation and man’s state as an equally strange mixture of matter and spirit.\textsuperscript{502} A middle-ground between the ‘bland’ and the ‘chaotic’, \textit{varietas} was seen as a virtue in rhetorical, visual and poetic style: according to Aquinas, ‘all that is mixed is more pleasing than that which is single’\textsuperscript{503}

Our sculptural idiom seems to respond to this preference for varietas in a number of different ways. At Norwich, where the bosses are studded across the long walks of the vault, connected by ribs as if strung together in garlands, they exhibit \textit{varietas} when seen as a group. Each walk contains within it a great variety of bosses: a variety of scenes, foliage, and ornament; a variety of figures, colours, patterns, and forms.\textsuperscript{504} Seen as a group they are a chained sequence of brightly coloured and gilded accretions, like naturally grown swallows’ nests, each varying wildly in its manifold details.\textsuperscript{505} In the twelfth century Theophilus had advocated a rich and varied aesthetic for church interiors:

\textit{‘For the human eye is not able to consider on what work first to fix its gaze; if it beholds ceilings they glow like brocades….’ with ‘infinitely rich and various workmanship.’}\textsuperscript{506}

\textsuperscript{501} Carruthers 2013, 135–64; it is also a perennial theme of Binski 2014b; see for example 28-9 and 45.
\textsuperscript{503} The sentiment comes from Aristotle-Avicenna. See Carruthers 2013, 152 and 48 quoting Aquinas, Sentencia ‘De anima’, 3, Lectio 2, n.15.
\textsuperscript{504} It is too easy, given the sculptural stress of this thesis, to forget that these objects were brightly coloured. On the reception of colour in the eye in medieval visual theory, see Camille 2000, 203.
\textsuperscript{505} For the ‘swallows’ nests’ image see Binski 2019, 201.
\textsuperscript{506} Carruthers 2013, 193.
Mary Carruthers dubs this critical-aesthetic trope ‘polyfocal perspective’: the possible *foci* for the beholder’s attention are many and varied. Standing in the cloister, looking up, we (like Theophilus) do not know on which boss first to fix our gaze. The same could be said of the chantry at St Helens, and to a lesser extent the parish church porches: bosses deployed as groups necessarily scatter our attention. Equally, ranks of misericords, pendant bosses, and sculpted capitals all defeat the viewer’s synoptic ambition, and demand the sequential appreciation of little pockets of sculpted detail.

Carruthers’ coinage of ‘polyfocal perspective’, however, must be nuanced a little further for our purposes. She uses ‘perspective’ in the sense of ‘point of view’ rather than any Albertian ‘seeing through’, and takes as the locus classicus of her coinage Procopius’ sixth-century account of Hagia Sophia:

> ‘all the details…. produce a single and most extraordinary harmony in the work, and yet do not permit the spectator to linger much over the study of any one of them, but each detail attracts the eye irresistibly to itself. So the vision constantly shifts suddenly, from the beholder is unable to select which particular detail be should admire more than all the others.’

Here it is ‘vision’ which constantly shifts suddenly, and not strictly the viewer’s ‘perspective’ in terms of relative position. Procopius praises the fact that, in such a rich building, a single viewpoint has within it many possible *foci*. In the case of the bosses, however, there are additional levels of ‘polyfocalism’ which we ought to consider, consistent with Carruthers’ thinking but additional to it. The initial pleasure in the bosses’ *varietas*, described above, is consistent with Procopius’ account - but soon the viewer discovers a need to *move* to admire and read their various scenes. Not only is it impossible to take in all the bosses from a single perspective; it is in fact impossible to take in even a single boss from a fixed perspective. Consider, for example, the most

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507 Carruthers 2013, 151–55. Binski extends the notion of ‘polyfocal perspective’ by the addition of its ‘opposite’, synoptic perspective: Binski 2014a, 354; these ideas are developed further in 2018, 21.

complex bosses of the north walk at Norwich [NH7/Model VI; NG4/Model X]. The spectator themselves (and not just their eye) is forced to ‘shift suddenly’, unable to linger. This is polyfocal sculpture which demands poly-perspectival viewing. So the ‘mixed’ aesthetic of the bosses delights on multiple levels: first as a delightfully various group which encourages a shifting gaze, exhibiting a mixture of colours, textures and details; then as individual bosses, which contain within themselves mixed ‘perspectives’ and demand movement. These levels continue to interact as the viewer proceeds through the cloister, each new position drawing attention to yet another boss, which encourages yet more movement. I return to the difficulties of using ‘perspective’ terminology in Chapter 7.

**Solidity**

Medieval geometry distinguished between geometry on a plane in two dimensions (length, width - spatium), and geometry of ‘solids’, which have a third dimension (height, density - altitudo, sublimitas, specitudo). It was thought that ‘solids’ were more ‘productive’ – more vivid, mentally tangible, and persuasive – as objects for contemplation than their two-dimensional equivalents.\(^{509}\) For Martianus Capella’s Lady Geometry, it is the quality of solidness that makes the basic two dimensional shapes ‘productive’ for thought: a square must become a cube, and a circle a sphere, before any process of mental operations can begin, because three dimensional imagined things are more ‘warmly persuasive’ than two dimensional abstractions.\(^{510}\)

When representing three-dimensional things in two dimensions, the third dimension (altitude, specitudo) had to be somehow indicated, either by visual cues or by accompanying description or context.\(^{511}\) Responding to cues, the reader/viewer could

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\(^{509}\) Carruthers 2017 Lecture III.  
\(^{510}\) For this passage see Stahl 1971, 2:270–71.  
\(^{511}\) Here I lean heavily on Carruthers’ current work, as set out in her 2017 lectures (Carruthers 2017) and discussed pers. comm. She points towards telling drawings of basic geometric operations – one of ‘splayed cube’, for example, f.4v in the twelfth-
contribute the imaginative act of ‘extrusion’ into a third dimension; such extrusion created a more ‘productive’ mental object but was also in itself a worthwhile process. In Hugh of St Victor’s *De Pictura Arcae*, Hugh begins by describing two dimensions (length and width), before asking the reader to ‘pull up’ the central section, extruding the shape and producing elevation from plan: it is the viewer’s own imaginative and transformative activity which is desirable.\[^{512}\]

This very general preference for three-dimensionality might have implications for our understanding of the bosses as ‘productive’, efficacious, tangible objects for contemplation, literal equivalents of desirable meditative objects. It also suggests a period-specific appreciation of the boss carver’s art, since amongst the *gravour’s* skills was the ability to turn two dimensions into three whilst carving, and to imagine things vividly in three dimensions. My investigations into the carving process (Chapter 4) revealed a significant lacuna: just how would a boss carver ‘feel his way’ from a surface sketch to a carving in depth? We are no closer to ‘explaining’ this ineffable process, but we can at least acknowledge that these mental operations were also undertaken (and admired) by contemplatives, who imitated craftsmen. Such operations were prized both as means to ends and as satisfying in themselves.

6.2.2  Zooming out

So far I have focussed primarily on rhetorical concepts and meditative habits that might have been familiar to the monks who used the cloister each day. The second half of this chapter ‘zooms out’ further, to consider more nebulous aesthetic categories, seeking the broader resonances that this sculptural idiom might have had with different audiences and in different contexts.

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\[^{512}\] Carruthers 1990, 298–303.
It must be stressed that the audience within the cloister probably did not consist solely of monks. Whether or not laypeople had access to the cloister has been the subject of some discussion: Sekules made much of the documented fact that floggings for heresy and Lollardy took place in the cloister in 1428-31, seeing the bosses as somehow responding to that occasion, ‘expressly, and increasingly, designed’ to express anti-Lollard sentiments.\textsuperscript{513} I reject this argument, but the use of the cloister for such public punishments does suggest that the admission of laypersons was not unusual. Carol Rawcliffe and Christopher Harper-Bill both assume that the bosses would have been shown off to visitors and the public.\textsuperscript{514} Even if the general public was excluded, there were a great many visitors whose business brought them into the cloister: bailiffs and tenants; country gentry; fellow Benedictines; members of the royal family; rural deans and representative clergy of the diocese, who met twice a year in the cathedral; the many craftsmen involved in building projects ongoing through the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{515} If the bosses were the subject of widespread admiration, as seems probable, we can more easily understand the diffusion of their idiom in nearby locations. We must understand the bosses as having an audience and an appeal beyond the contemplative monks who were their first intended viewers.

In any case, I have shown in Chapters 3 and 5 that this sculptural ‘idiom’ enjoyed a rich life outside the cloister where it was employed most notably, finding imitations in other local building schemes around East Anglia and echoes in other sculptural media of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. What aesthetic concepts authentic to the period might be necessary to equip us with a less anachronistic reading of this mannered aesthetic? Below I consider some general and necessarily nebulous categories which might contribute to an authentic interpretation of this idiom.

\textsuperscript{513} Sekules 2006, 300–301. Any statement of orthodox belief would, of course, be anti-Lollard.
\textsuperscript{514} Harper-Bill 2004, 77. Bishop Salmon requested in 1309 that the monks keep their courts clean of dung and rubbish to avoid becoming the subject of common gossip among the visiting public: Carter 1935, 19–24.
\textsuperscript{515} Harper-Bill 2004, 81.
Impressive aesthetics

A useful image for thinking about the bosses’ three-dimensionality, their mixture of protrusion and engraving, might be found in the medieval discourse around wax seal imprinting as a metaphor for cognition. The metaphor is first found in Aristotle’s *De Anima* Book ii, where he describes the way sensory impressions are registered in the soft substance of the mind; it became a medieval commonplace. It featured in discussions of sight, touch, and memory, from Aquinas to Bacon: species and forms of objects are registered in the waxy, retentive substance of the *imagination vel formalis*. It was equally important in thinking about pedagogy, formation and vocation, and exemplarity. A good teacher would mould students in their image, as imprints struck from a die, and in this way it offered a way of thinking about man’s relationship to Christ, his perfect model: for Peter Abelard, God is like the material of the matrix, and Christ is the image borne by that matrix; man is the wax which (all being well!) takes the shape of Christ. In each case, the metaphor accounts for the way in which spirit or pattern can be passed between different media without any material transfer having taken place.

The citations above evidence a growing body of scholarly literature on this important trope. Only a few scholars, however, have considered the trope as a way of thinking about sculptural aesthetics. Michael Camille drew a close link between this trope and sculpture in relief, suggesting that, just our most ubiquitous visual medium today – photography – shapes the way we think and see, so the impression of a matrix in wax

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516 A good summary is Bedos-Rezak 2008; see also Carruthers 1990 on the metaphor from its inception in Aristotle, into scholastic thought, particularly Aquinas; also Lakey 2018a, 132–33 citing William Durand of Mende and Sicardus of Cremona; and A. M. Smith 2014, 150–54.
517 On this scholastic-optical strand of the metaphor see Camille 2000, 209–11.
518 On the pedagogical metaphor see Jaeger 2013, 10–11; on the Christological metaphor see Bedos-Rezak 2006, 51.
519 Camille 2000, 209–11 draws a close connection between the topos and medieval sculpture and calls for further research. More recently, Cooper and Lieno 2007, 30; especially Wright 2007, 224; also Lakey 2018a, 132–33.
shaped a great deal medieval thought and experience. If we follow Camille in arguing that relief sculpture was often thought of as being like a seal matrix, ready to print itself into the viewer’s memory, we might consider this: what qualities would be desirable in sculpture thus construed? To be potent, a sculpture/matrix must protrude into the soft wax of the viewer’s consciousness: it must be a deeply-cut die, with contrasting recesses and protrusions which will register well, making a deep and lasting impression. There is, as has been noted, a tactility to this way of thinking about seeing. Where a figure sculptor could often rely on polychromy to differentiate different materials and textures, most seals are pressed in wax of a single colour, and thus rely solely on textural contrast – protrusion and recession, passages of complex texture - for their visual effect.

There are a number ways in which the Norwich bosses formally resemble seal matrices waiting to ‘make an impression’ on their viewer. They share the round format of matrices, and the centrally focussed compositions which this encourages. The reverse of the third conventual seal from Canterbury, 1232, is a particularly close match for the Norwich bosses [Fig.226]: the circular frame and the way the architecture is arranged within it conspire to thrust the central doorway forward (in part a ‘real’ effect achieved with a protrusion of wax; in part one implied by linear means). As well as the general arrangement, however, they also share some textural characteristics of seal matrices. The open doorways of the Canterbury seal, achieved through the use of multiple matrices, open up space within the wax itself, inhabited by figures. The three-part matrix which survives from the seal for Southwick Priory c.1258 and the Norwich Cathedral Priory seal of 1258 both rejoice in a similar delicacy of inhabited architecture rendered in wax [Fig.227, 228]. Like matrix cutters, the Norwich gravours pursued dramatic

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520 The much-cited passage from Dante’s Divine Comedy, it should be noted, imagines the sculpted relief as wax which has received an impression of angelic character, rather than as a matrix which will make an impression on the viewer. See Wright 2007, 224 fn.3.
521 On the experience of touch linked to sculpture, see Dent 2014; also Quiviger 2007, who comments on this connection from a neuroscientific angle.
undercutting, drilling, and excavation, to create a striking mixture of raised protrusion and deep windows of recession into the boss’ fabric [consider the undercut pelican in NB3, deep drilling in W34, and commonplace crevasses between figures such as NF3; also the floating hail stones in WG2 and the flying staircase in SL6]. The different levels of relief achievable in multi-matrix wax – mixing surface detail with pockets of deeper excavation - could be thought of as being like the mixture of surface engraving and deep drilling/cutting found in the late bosses. We might think again about the possibility that they were originally modelled in a malleable substance such as clay, as discussed in Chapter 4. And, rather like die cutters working in monochrome, the Norwich gravours also placed particular emphasis on the differentiation of engraved textures (cloth, cloud, corn, masonry) [Fig. 229].

These comparisons with seal aesthetics go some way to freeing the bosses from the pitfalls of anachronistic ‘window’ paradigms of early-modern relief sculpture (I return to this problem in Chapter 7). Of course, other medieval paradigms existed for thinking about images: the ‘mirror’ metaphor was common, often carrying emphasis on distortion and fleetingness: that paradigm would go on to form the basis of Brunelleschi’s optical experiments, which in turn led to the codifying of linear perspective, for it was but a short jump from seeing the image as a mirror to seeing it as a window.523 But for these bosses, which are so invested in swelling and protrusion and which participate so little in any ‘pictorial’ recession, the ‘sigilistic’ paradigm is more apt.

In this light, the Windsor contract of 1506 (discussed in Chapter 4) is even more resonant. The request for bosses to be more ‘holower and more pendaunt’ is, on one level, simply a demand for richer, more elaborate workmanship: for bosses more technically demanding and more special.524 Alison Wright notes that, even in certain non-art fields during the same period in Italy, depth of extrusion figured as an indicator of value - for

523 Edgerton 2006; Bedos-Rezak 2006, 50.
524 Salzman 1997, 536; Hope 1913, 2:460.
example, the depth of pile in rich cloth – simply because of its difficulty. Such ‘conspicuous consumption’ may indeed have been the primary motivation for demanding deep relief in many cases. But it does seem significant that sculptural depth, particularly, commonly carried with it associations of vividness: a sculpture gave a fuller impression of something than a painted sketch ever could. It is not inconceivable that, consciously or unconsciously, the *topos* of matrices and imprinting, intertwined with theories of optics and memory, contributed to the desire for deep engraving. The Windsor contract demands (and the Norwich bosses deliver) great depth, extrusion and recession: bosses which are more sculptural than painterly, and therefore capable of making a lasting impression in the soft wax of the mind.

*Circles and spheres*

In ordinary Latin, ‘*circulus*’ is ‘an orbit, a circular path’ as well as a geometrical figure: motion is inherent in circles, and circular things invite circumambulation and rotation, real or mental. Because of this rotational potential, circles and spheres were particularly ‘productive’ forms for meditation and thought; they had contemplative clout. Wheels were an obvious choice for combinatory exercises: unlike tree and ladder diagrams, diagrammatic wheels readily interact with other wheels, revolving and interconnecting. For Nicholas of Cusa in the fifteenth century, the roundness of a bowling ball and the concentric circles of the bowling green on which it rolled made it a fertile and productive stimulus for contemplation. Many simple diagrams also worked

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525 Wright 2007, 227.
526 Sculpture in relief is sometimes deployed as a metaphor the deep impression made by someone’s personality: Gentile de Becchi wrote of Lorenzo di Medici that his ‘reputation, once painted, is now sculpted and stands out’: Wright 2007, 224. The same metaphor survives in modern English: to make a good or lasting *impression*; to be *struck* by something; to be *impressed*.
527 Carruthers 2017 Lecture 3. She quotes the example of the Westminster Cosmati pavement: the reader should ‘revolve’ the pavement for contemplation, both mentally and by walking around and within it.
528 Cusanus 2000, 2:1182–1248; for similar such games see Carruthers 2013, 14–27.
on the principle of linked, related circles.\textsuperscript{529} We might think of grouped bosses, therefore, as loosely resembling such diagrams: a net of related subjects which could form the basis for thought, enabling the continued tracing of different routes and combinations.\textsuperscript{530}

The sphere (and its poor cousin, the circle) was for centuries considered the most divine and perfect of shapes. It was, first and foremost, the shape of the universe, a universe which shows the creator’s work in its geometry: thinkers drew a dichotomy between the circle, which was eternal & infinite, and the impoverished line, which is temporal & finite.\textsuperscript{531} Any physical circle or ‘rotundity’, which necessarily partakes of this pure & eternal nature only partially, can nonetheless express the divine and the universal better than a ‘quadrature’ ever could.\textsuperscript{532} We find this theme expressed across a broad sweep of medieval thought, from Martianus Capella, whose Lady Geometry argues that the sphere ‘contains all figures within itself’ and is therefore capable of infinite creativity, to Nicholas of Cusa.\textsuperscript{533} It is no surprise, then, that circles and spheres feature so often in thought about visionary or divine sight. Peter of Limoges explicitly connected the sphere with divine sight, in his extended metaphor of the mirrored sphere.\textsuperscript{534} In the cosmic vision of St Benedict, the whole world appeared as an orb; and in Julian of

\textsuperscript{529} For example, wheel diagrams: The Wheel of Life in the Psalter of Robert de Lisle (London, British Library, MS Arundel 83, II, fol.126v), c.1310; or on church walls at Leominster and Kempley, for which see Kupfer 2016, 86–90. Genealogical diagrams were structured like this too: see London, British Library MS Royal 14 B VI.

\textsuperscript{530} This is more the case in the north walk than in the west, but still relevant in the west where the key scenes populate the ridge rib and subsidiaries occupy the surrounding bosses which often elaborate key scenes more freely.

\textsuperscript{531} On this see Cusanus 2000, 2:1188–91. The sphere was an emerging metaphor for God’s infinity and placelessness – ‘\textit{Deus est sphaera infinita, eius centrum est ubique, circumferential nusquam}’ [God is an infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere’]: see Lakey 2015, 116; for a similar image see Cusanus 1997, 249; and Denery 2005, 76.

\textsuperscript{532} See Nicholas of Cusa on this point: Cusanus, \textit{Metaphysical speculations. Vol. 2}, 1188ff.

\textsuperscript{533} Carruthers 2017 Lecture 3; Cusanus 2000, 2:1188ff.

\textsuperscript{534} For Peter, the circle had a natural equality which nonetheless focussed on a centre, and this was mirrored both in God’s reality and in the physical structure of the eye. See Denery 2005, 76.
Norwich’s *Revelations of Divine Love*, the universe appeared as a little thing, ‘the quantity of a hazelnut, as round as a ball’.

In line with this literary/philosophical trope, there are a number of visual traditions/devices which might be argued to express this connection between circles and divine sight, and might have reached a wide audience. Framing devices of all kinds were necessary building blocks for a visual language which had to depict different levels of reality (angelic apparition within a mundane scene, for example) alongside one another. Wherever a circle or sphere is employed to frame a scene, we ought to consider the possibility that the choice of this particular kind of frame confers upon the scene a special kind of meaning. It is of note, for example, that circles repeatedly frame Hildegard’s visionary illustrations in the Scivias.

A number of other instances can be found which hint at an association between circular framing and special sight. First, we might think of the ‘conventionalised representations’ of the orbis terrarum held in God’s hand, in instances such as on the Westminster retable, or in the *Bible Moralisée* prefatory pages, or even on boss WA0 in crude form. Here the cosmos is represented as a glassy sphere in which organic elements are circumscribed by a forma.

Secondly, relatedly, Marcia Kupfer has meditated at length on the significance of the Hereford map’s circular form as symbolising totality: the whole of human endeavour is

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535 For Benedict see Kupfer 2016, 158; for Julian see her Ch.5, Norwich 2003, 8.
536 For the use of visual frames in medieval narrative art see Ringbom 1980. For a focussed case study, Zchomelidse 2010.
537 Recent interdisciplinary studies of ‘framing’ have helped to complicate the idea of frames as pure ‘decoration’: according to Wolfgang Kemp, the frame ‘defines and gives voice to the image it encloses’. See Duro 1996, 2; and W. Kemp 1997; also Schapiro 1969.
538 For reproduced examples see Hildegard 1990, 137, 159, 323.
539 Kupfer 2016, 8; for the retable image see Binski and Massing 2010, 63; and for the Bibles Moralisée see Tachau 1998, 8.
here circumscribed, invoking a divine perspective.\footnote{Kupfer 2016, 22.} Patrick Gautier Delaché has argued the mappa mundi genre more generally to emulate the spiritual rapture of the visionary who momentarily shares in God’s perspective on the world; he argues Benedict’s cosmic vision to have been important in the legitimation, development and possible uses of mappa mundi images, which thrived in monastic contexts: they had pedagogical functions, but were also ‘a graphic homologue of the perspective extra mundum proper to God’.\footnote{Gautier Delaché 2009, 25–26; cited in Kupfer 2016, 56.} Another fine example of this connection between circular images and divine sight is Bosch’s painting Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things, c.1490-95. The seven sins are arranged around an all-seeing iris bearing the legend ‘beware, beware, God sees’. The round format echoes the shape of the human eye but also orientates multiple scenes around a single centre, thereby suggesting a plural divine perspective. According to Joseph Koerner, these scenes ‘are a worldscape of a kind, one wrapped around itself, like the world’s orb turned inside out and upside down’.\footnote{Koerner 2014, 317.} Yet again, circular devices indicate that there is a special kind of representation in play: we are being shown something paradoxical, an infinite perspective within a finite medium.

Thirdly, and more generally, roundels were simply a common fifteenth-century device for the framing narrative scenes. The roundel, used extensively in the Bibles Moralisée and early Genesis illustrations, became a particular favourite for the illustration of Marian mysteries (Joys of the Virgin/Meditations on the Virgin/Sorrows of the Virgin) in the fifteenth century [Fig.23].\footnote{For circular images of Genesis see Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Lat. 53, fol.7v. For Marian roundels, Scholten 2017, 119–20.} This perhaps conferred some ‘visionary’ quality on the scenes, or even recalled the diagrammatic tradition described above, where roundels were linked in chains or machines to demonstrate their interdependence and interconnection. An interesting parallel has already been drawn between roundel depictions and physical rosary chains.\footnote{Falkenburg 2017a, 118.} Rosary beads could even be thought of strings
of sculptural spheres, each blank bead standing for the mystery whose contemplation it prompts: indeed, Netherlandish prayer nuts were sometimes presented in groups, like strings of historiated rosary beads, evidencing this parallel [Fig.231]. Our bosses could likewise be thought of as being like a chain of rosary beads or roundel depictions, strung together across a vault for use in repetitive and patterned meditation. This comparison finds a nice echo in the finely carved rosary beads depicted in boss WG3, which echo with the chipped, spherical rounds of the bosses themselves.

A visual analogy could also be drawn between the boss hemispheres and the convex form of ‘Beryl stones’. Beryl stones were optical aids, which would magnify (and in so doing distort) texts for easier reading.\textsuperscript{545} Beryls often served as a metaphors for improved spiritual sight, in the same way that glasses sometimes connoted prayer.\textsuperscript{546} Nicholas of Cusa’s treatise of 1458, ‘\textit{De beryllo}’, is a treatise about spiritual sight - he justifies his choice of title: ‘Beryl stones are bright, white and transparent. To them are given both concave and convex forms. And someone who looks through them apprehends that which previously was invisible. If an intellectual beryl […] were fitted to our intellectual eyes, then through the intermediateness of this beryl the indivisible beginning of all things would be attained’.\textsuperscript{547} For Nicholas, the optical distortions and refractions of the beryl are an extended metaphor for the paradoxes required if a finite intellect is to grasp infinite things. Each boss, then, might be said to visually recall a magnifying beryl, distorting in order to reveal.

Similarly, convex mirrors, found in so many Netherlandish painted interiors, perhaps offer an apt comparison for some of the curvature and distortion achieved in stone. Bosses such as WC4 and NA0 demonstrate this resemblance well; in the former, particularly, the cathedral spire bends extravagantly across the boss’ curvature much as it would across a mirror. It seems the carver has taken pleasure in the linearity of the

\textsuperscript{545} On ‘beryls’, lenses, and optical aids generally, see Frugoni 2005, 4–7.
\textsuperscript{546} Falkenburg 2017b, 178; citing Mann 1992, 31–57.
\textsuperscript{547} Cusanus 2001, 1:793.
distortion, emphasising the boss’ brittle graphic surface. In a boss such as NB4 the
elegant bending of straight lines serves to swell the centre of the scene and to give it a
pleasing sense of self-containedness, comparable to the mirrored images of Van Eyck
[Fig.233]. Convex mirrors were traditionally an attribute of Luxuria, but in the fifteenth
century they began to be associated with mysticism and occultism: the mirror’s extreme
distortions, Anthony Janson claims, served to heighten the viewer’s ambivalence toward
vision and perceived ‘reality’.548 But as well as any such highfalutin possible meaning,
much of the appeal for the boss carvers (as for Netherlandish painters such as Petrus
Christus [Fig.232]) must surely have been the opportunity to demonstrate technical
prowess in feats of extreme distortion.

Subtilitas, wit & cunning

When considering these bosses as pieces of craftsmanship, one term that period viewers
could have reached for to praise them was subtilitas. Meaning subtility, fine-ness, or
cunning, the term had connotations of wittiness, craftiness, and incisiveness.549
Ingenuity and subtlety were closely related concepts in many later early-modern
European lexicons, and already in the fifteenth century subtilitas had been connected
with ingegno.550

We find a number of instances in documentary sources where the term ‘subtilis’ is
attached to fine carving. The Oxford carver John Sampson, as we saw in Chapter 4, was
praised in court for his skill and subtlety (valde capiens & subtilis) which justified his
higher wage.551 A startlingly similar use of the term is found in Orvieto in 1281, when
the sculptor Ramo di Paganello was pardoned in order that he might continue working

548 Janson 1985.
549 On the broad, multivalent meanings of ‘subtilitas’, see Carruthers 2013, 188–89; and
Marr et al. 2019, 238–40, 176.
550 Marr et al. 2019, 79.
551 Salzmann 1997, 74.
on the cathedral façade, because his carving was recognised to be ‘subtilioribus’. A contract from Nuremberg also uses the term in relation to sculpture: Adam Kraft was obliged to make the upper registers of a tabernacle artfully well but not as ‘subtilig’ as the lower work: subtlety was expensive, and only worth doing where it would be seen up close: in the Norwich cloister, for example, but perhaps not in the cathedral nave. It was particularly used of the fine work required in micro-art contexts, such as when working in boxwood. Subtlety was also risky: in one thirteenth century account it is juxtaposed with prudence. In one intriguing definition from 1538, ‘subtyll’ features alongside ‘holow’ and ‘ingraued’, ‘pleasant’ and ‘polyte’ as synonyms of ‘glaphirus’; here we see a possible connection between fine carving and fine manners, as in the modern word ‘refined’. ‘Subtit’ carving, then, was fine carving, needing to be seen up close; it was masterful, evidence of a superior craftsman; it was expensive to produce; it was refined, polite, holow and engraved, and it was risky: skilfulness bordering on imprudence, and pushing at the bounds of the possible. ‘Subtit’ therefore seems an excellent period term with which to describe the fine sculptural idiom developed at Norwich, particularly applicable to instances of extremely fine work and risky undercutting [WG2, WJ4, SL6, among others].

A more comprehensive lexical study of period terms for craft and carving could hope to explore the overlap between notions of ‘subtlety’ and notions of ‘wit’. I have used the term ‘witty’ throughout this thesis somewhat a-historically, to refer to the innovative, humorous, idiomatic and skilful manipulation of forms, but it was not unrelated to notions of craftiness even in the fifteenth century. Part of its definition in subsequent

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552 White 1959, 257. White sees this description of Ramo as perhaps being overblown, but the fact remains that ‘subtilioribus’ is used as a term of praise.
553 Kavaler 2012, 8. Another instance from 1500 is cited by Baxandall: Baxandall 1982, 145.
554 Scholten 2017, 55.
556 ‘Glaphirus, a, um: ioconde, plesant, ingraued, polyte, holow, famous, subtyll’: see Thomas Elyot, The Dictionary of Sir Thomas Elyot (1538), sig.Iiii’.
centuries was to do with ineffability; wit was something recognisable but ultimately indefinable. One later commentator remarked of wit that ‘if I could tell you what it were, it would not be what it is, being somewhat above expression, and such a volatile thing’.

It seems another apt term, therefore, to describe the ineffable, improvisatory process of working out a design in three dimensions from a two-dimensional drawing on the surface of the block. ‘Cunning’ is another term worth exploring, often used to describe the williness of artisans; it could mean both skilful and deceitful. These concepts were all related, as we see in one later definition of deceit: ‘a subtile wilie shift or devise… Hereunto may be drawen all manner of craft, subtiltie, guile, fraude, wihnes, slightness, cunning’. Cunning and wit, then, were closely related, and both were related to ingenuity through connotations of subtlety.

**Conclusion**

Zooming out, or ‘casting around’ (as Baxandall called it), risks a kind of disintegration: if all formal and conceptual echoes might have coloured contemporary experience of the bosses, no neat limit can be given as to what is ‘relevant’ explanatory material and what is extraneous. Like auditory ‘phonaesthemes’, the echoing associations which certain visual forms have is surely part of their meaning as it was experienced historically, but eventually these resonances become so slight as to be indefensible. It is in the end impossible to ‘explain’ the resonance or appeal which a particular style has or had; we must admit that in the end we cannot explain style. With Gombrich, we must acknowledge both the inadequacy of reductionism and the impossibility of total understanding. But despite the final insufficiency of the method, some of the analogies offered above perhaps help us to see these bosses less anachronistically than we might otherwise be tempted to.

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558 Flecknoe, 1664, cited in Marr et al. 2019, 221.
559 Marr et al. 2019, 229.
561 On ‘phonaesthemes’ see Paterson 2018, 24–47.
There was, however, no one ‘period eye’ which viewed the bosses at the time of their making. Even in a small community such as that which formed around the construction of the cloister, the *gravour* might have reached for one set of analogies to describe a bosses’ idiom, and the commissioning Prior another set entirely. And in fact, the communities which surrounded the objects pulled together in this thesis where plural: the kind of responses, conscious or unconscious, which the 1420s bosses would have engendered in the cloister would have been different to those engendered even by similar bosses in a parish church porch at Hethersett in 1440, or in the chantry chapel at St Helens in 1460. In each case the audiences and circumstances differed but we lack the documentary evidence or knowledge of the exact contexts to do much to flesh out these differences. Similarly, the same sculptural idiom deployed in misericords, in Netherlandish architectural sculpture and in portable arts, would have engendered vastly different responses in each case: some responses specific to the differing context, and some very general and therefore perhaps to some extent common to the sculptural idiom generally. Because of this near-infinite complexity of viewers and contexts, some of the analogies offered here may, if we were able to be able to put them to a Norwich *gravour* or the Prior, have seemed completely alien or inappropriate. They may nevertheless do work for us in ‘making strange’ our anachronistic perception of the objects, and perhaps even communicating to us some underlying habits of fifteenth-century visual experience which worked for the Prior or the *gravour* at a subconscious level.
Chapter 7  
Implications for the study of ‘perspective’ in medieval sculpture

The terms used in earlier chapters to discuss the formal characteristics of the bosses – ‘distortion’, ‘warping’, ‘bending’, ‘twisting’, ‘inconsistent pictorial space’, the necessity of ‘mobile viewing’ – mostly imply deviation from some kind of ‘norm’. Consideration reveals this ‘norm’ to be the paradigm of linear perspective. Commenting further on these aspects of style therefore risks anachronism, because those concepts which come naturally to the modern art historian (pictorial space, point of view, foreshortening, projection) are largely post-medieval, products of the complex discourse around linear perspective which has grown up since its fifteenth-century invention in Italy.

The Norwich bosses, needless to say, do not by any means follow the conventions of linear perspective. Setting the boss of Herod’s feast [boss NG4; Model X] alongside Donatello’s bronze relief of the same subject demonstrates this conveniently, if crudely [Figs.234, 235]. Both are products of the 1420s; both are pieces of relief sculpture which foreshorten and flatten masses against a ‘picture plane’ - and yet they differ utterly in the way their internal space is organized. Donatello’s converging lines imply a more or less static viewer: the further one moves from the intended viewpoint, the more the illusion of a finestra aperta dissolves. The Norwich scene, however, unfurls across a convex surface: the further one travels around it the more one sees.

To try to discuss the bosses in the language of Albertian perspective, then, would be to force a round peg into a square hole. And yet, at its broadest the discourse around ‘perspective’ embraces not just ‘linear perspective’ but any spatial relationship between...

563 This comparison is convenient and illustrative because of the convergence of date and subject matter, but it should be noted that Donatello’s version is far from being simplistic or orthodox in terms of its own spatial grammar. The narrative snakes through the segmented depths of the pictorial space, and the viewer’s shifting position alters the emphasis of the raking and the protrusion of the forestage. My thanks to Jules Lubbock for stressing this.
artwork and viewer. Whenever the form of an artwork anticipates or accommodates the position of the viewer there is some perspectival premise underlying the work. The established discourse may be dominated by normative thinking which foregrounds linear perspective, but it is necessary to engage with it since there is no alternative terminology readily available for discussing the relationship between depicted bodies and the space that surrounds them, the compression of solids, the insinuation of fictive space, or the spatial relationship between the artwork and the viewer. I will argue that medieval spatial representation is almost entirely untheorized in art-historical scholarship other than in negative relation to linear perspective; spatial representation in sculpture of all kinds is also poorly theorised, again because of the hegemony of linear perspective in existing scholarship. Christopher Lakey’s very recent study has drawn attention to this theoretical problem; I have a number of issues with Lakey’s stance, although I cannot offer a full critique of his work in this context.

This chapter begins by briefly surveying the relevant aspects of the existing scholarship on perspective, focussing on the way perspective in sculpture has been theorized to date. I then consider the possibility of describing the boss sculptor’s idiom as a variety of ‘perspective’; this leads me to stress the unsystematic nature of this spatial idiom. I stress the pitfalls of trying to describe systematically an idiom which is not systematic and trying to describe objectively the subjective qualia of perception. I conclude by suggesting some relevant period concepts, gleaned from thirteenth, fourteenth and

564 Marvin Trachtenberg describes all perspective technologies as organising the image ‘in a structural relationship to an ideal spectator’: see Trachtenberg 2009, 8.

565 I discuss the principal exceptions to this generalization in coming sections. The most comprehensive attempt at escaping the paradigm is Summers 2003, 43-52 and passim. Reviewing Summers’ work, James Elkins parses a number of possible strategies available to the Western art historian when trying to bridge the gulf between non-Western (including pre-Modern) and Western discourses: Summers’ approach (to which I am sympathetic) is to adjust and redefine existing Western concepts to better fit non-Western art. The Baxandallian strategy is to do this by the recovery of ‘indigenous critical concepts’; Elkins sees this as a distinct method, whereas I see it as complementary to Summers’. Elkins 2004, 377.

566 Lakey 2018a; developing the argument begun in 2015; and 2018b.
fifteenth-century ‘perspectivist’ theologians, as epistemological stances consonant with the representational strategies on which this thesis has focussed, in order to break some of the current deadlock around the issue of perspective in sculpture.

7.1 Historiography of perspective in sculpture

Although handbooks, manuals and treatises on ‘perspectival’ methods were being authored from the fifteenth century onwards, it was only in the nineteenth century that a ‘critical’ and interpretive discourse emerged. ⁵⁶⁷ Hegel, Reigl and Wölfflin were each interested in different representations of space in various media because of what they suggested about the relationship between artwork and viewer which the artwork anticipated. ⁵⁶⁸ For Hegel, the relationship between the material object and the viewer’s mind is something of which the viewer is self-conscious: the viewer feels an object’s suitability for their mind, or its alien-ness, based on the demands the artwork makes of them (i.e. standing still), which they will find more or less appealing depending on their (temporally conditioned) tastes:

‘By displaying what is subjective, the work, in its whole mode of presentation, reveals its purpose as existing for the subject, for the spectator and not on its own account. The spectator is, as it were, in it from the beginning, is counted in with it, and the work exists only for this fixed point, i.e. for the individual apprehending it.’ ⁵⁶⁹

This is an early statement of an idea that would find fuller expression in the work of Riegl and, later, Panofsky. For Riegl, this related to the way the various objects of a scene have been made to cohere either among themselves (Podro calls this ‘internal coherence’) or by involving the viewer in that coherence (when the viewer is necessary

⁵⁶⁷ The literature on perspective is vast; I survey some key texts in this chapter. A good road map is Veltman 1986; for a more theoretically incisive summary see Elkins 1994.
⁵⁶⁸ For a summary of the discourse in this period see Podro 1982, 22–24.
to ‘complete’ a scene Podro calls this ‘external coherence’). Wölfflin’s contrasting pairs of terms likewise distinguished between grouped objects which were self-sufficient in their relations (closed) and grouped objects which required the viewer’s subjective interpretation (open); or between scenes which were planar and scenes which were recessional. As Gombrich diagnosed, there is in Wölfflin an assumption of a kind of ‘norm’: Wölfflin, like Hildebrand and Burkhardt, favoured a kind of classical, objective clarity, and assumed a paradigm of viewing for both painting and sculpture which fixed the viewer to a single point.

In 1927 Panofsky published *Perspective as Symbolic Form*. We might see this essay as a kind of pivot, the moment when the Hegelian interest in the subject/object relationship encoded within artworks, which had been gradually accruing in the preceding century, was applied specifically to the problem of perspective in such a provocative and suggestive way as to shape all subsequent scholarship on the matter. The essay is essentially a synthesis of terminology and methodology borrowed from Cassirer and Riegl. Panofsky’s central contention is that the forms of spatial organization inherent in works of art are direct correlates of the cosmologies and modes of perception of the ages to which they belong: Panofsky was probing the correlation of one Cassirerian ‘symbolic form’ – perspective – with other aspects of the ‘intelligent organisation of reality’ (cosmology, optics) across different European cultural periods. In scientific

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573 Panofsky 1997.
574 Damisch called it ‘the inescapable horizon line and reference point for all enquiry concerning this object of study and all related matters’: Damisch 1994, 3.
576 Riegl had hinted at a similar sort of Hegelian interconnection, but Riegl had hung back from making explicit connections between works of art and *Weltanschauungen*. Cassirer gave Panofsky a philosophical system with which to investigate such connections. Wood 1997, 8.
thought, for example, Cassirer had described a shift from an anisotropic worldview (in Antiquity), which was interested merely in substances, to an isotropic worldview (in the Renaissance) more concerned with the function of bodies, which necessarily demanded a unifying, homogenous concept of space: it was but a short step from these kinds of observations to Panofsky’s thesis. But in proposing these parallelisms, Panofsky was happy to accept very approximate synchrony: he made modern geometry worked out by Desargues correspond to Descartes’ directionless space, and to Alberti’s *costruzione legittima*, and to Kantian epistemology - despite the centuries separating these personae: these are, according to Wood, ‘spectacular moments of irresponsible synthesis’.577

Despite these difficulties, the essential thesis – that perspective in art is symptomatic of, or symbiotically related to, other contemporaneous epistemologies – has become almost orthodox in perspective studies.578

Panofsky proposed a three-act structure, with proto-perspective existing in Antiquity but then undergoing radical regression and reinvention in the medieval period to prepare for its eventual Renaissance flourishing. Space and bodies, having been treated as anisotropic and discontinuous in Antiquity, became welded together in Byzantine art and in Romanesque relief, and thereafter when bodies expand into fictive space the space around them must expand too: bodies and space have been forged into a single homogenous substance, a ‘common currency’.579 The sections of the perspective essay which refer to medieval art are very difficult: one gets the sense that Panofsky is using Medieval spatial representation, then (as now) much less studied than either Antique or Renaissance perspective, as a sandbox in which he can perform the necessary preparatory manoeuvres to prepare the ground for Renaissance perspective. His analysis

577 Wood 1997, 18.
579 Panofsky 1997. The ground for this thesis had been prepared in Panofsky 1924: Romanesque art flattened antique illusionism in ways that Byzantine art did not; on this see Lakey 2018b, 121–23.
of High Gothic relief (in the Naumburg choirscreen) is key: the stage-like space is regular and continuous within its own finite borders; side walls, floor, rear wall and baldachin all delimit a finite space-box (*Raumkasten*) within which space is systematically organized; all that remains is for the borders to be extended *ad infinitum* to produce Renaissance space. \(^{580}\) But few other examples are marshalled in support of this characterization of Gothic relief, and no provision is made for relief sculpture which does not conform to this rule.

**Medieval perspective**

The tendency to see medieval spatial representation as merely laying the groundwork for Renaissance discoveries – a kind of inept and naïve fumbling which created necessary preconditions - has persisted in perspective scholarship following Panofsky. Miriam Schild Bunim’s study *Space in Medieval Painting and the Forerunners of Perspective*, for example, maintained Panofsky’s developmental narrative while shifting the focus toward a larger corpus of medieval material. \(^{581}\) In adopting Panofsky’s narrative Bunim made herself vulnerable to the same criticisms: is it justifiable to see medieval spatial representation merely as precondition for the future emergence of Renaissance perspective? Unlike Panofsky, Bunim attempted only a description of different representations of space, avoiding any explanation of their relationship to contemporary conceptual structures: this lends her whole project an air of anachronism, since she assumed that the concept of ‘space’ remained the same throughout the ages, and that what is different is only the way space is depicted. \(^{582}\) Bunim’s work is, nevertheless, the

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\(^{580}\) Panofsky 1997, 52–53.

\(^{581}\) Bunim was aware of the inadequacy of linear perspective terms as a way of describing non perspectival art: she draws a distinction between objects distributed across a pictorial ground according to some conceptual logic (eg. hierarchical scaling) and objects distributed according to a visual logic (optical systems such as linear perspective), and this ought to have hinted at the fact that Medieval spatial organization and its Renaissance equivalent are entirely different epistemological paradigms, but she did not pursue these arguments. Bunim 1940, 6–11.

\(^{582}\) Krautheimer 1941, 180.
most systematic study of medieval spatial representation to date.\textsuperscript{583} John White’s survey account of the development of perspective also largely accepted Panofsky’s developmental narrative, though he too edited from it all speculation on \textit{Weltansbaunungen}.\textsuperscript{584} White’s narrative follows the gradual ‘emancipation’ of visible faces of objects from the need to coincide with the picture plane, and medieval art therefore features once again as a temporary regression: in early Christian art there was a ‘complete return to complex frontal depictions’ (ie. all visual faces allied to the picture plane) which would (more or less) persist until the emancipatory developments of the Quattrocento.\textsuperscript{585} Alastair Fowler’s study of Renaissance perspective is more forthright about the need to complicate the teleology of such models, and points instead towards the plurality of ‘perspectives’ employed in early-modern picture making.\textsuperscript{586}

\textit{Perspective and sculpture}

There has been very little published, however, on the problem of how ideas of perspective (linear or otherwise; renaissance or medieval; correct or incorrect) apply to sculpture.\textsuperscript{587} Any sculpture which compresses, foreshortens or ‘distorts’ proportions is engaged in the production of \textit{phantasma}, ‘appearance’, or ‘virtuality’; it either relies on comprehension from a certain viewpoint or viewpoints or else it is content with the effects which contrary viewpoints will produce.\textsuperscript{588} It expects to be seen from certain

\textsuperscript{583} Veltman 2004, 93.
\textsuperscript{584} Elkins calls it a ‘less complete version of the same emplotment’. Elkins 1994, 216.
\textsuperscript{585} White 1987, 28.
\textsuperscript{586} Fowler 2003, 1–19. My thanks to Christina Faraday for pointing me towards this.
\textsuperscript{587} Hopkins 2010 challenged the mathematical grounds for considering sculpture to have ‘perspective’, but discussed only non-distortive sculpture in the round.
\textsuperscript{588} Plato distinguished between sculptors (who generally maintained the ‘true proportions’ of objects, making likenesses, \textit{eikon}) and painters (who did not, making \textit{phantasma}), but went on to recall the great corpus of sculpture which is distortive: sculpture with optical corrections; relief sculpture with its various depths which compress and foreshorten ‘true proportions’ in the same way (if not to the same extreme) a painter might. Plato, Sophist, 233-236. He distinguishes between likenesses, which are objectively like, and appearances, which appear like from only a certain position.
angles; ‘the beholder is in it from the beginning’.

And yet, distortive sculpture raises different problems to those of painterly perspective. Rigorous painterly linear perspective implies (in theory, if not in practice) a fixed, monocular observer (as in Brunelleschi’s foundational experiment) but sculpture of any depth appeals to binocular vision and mobile observation. Any foreshortening in sculpture is therefore inherently paradoxical: it offers illusions which work from one ‘point’ in a medium which must be seen from multiple ‘points’ to be appreciated.

The principle of mobile spectatorship has only recently begun to be theorised.

Panofsky was happy to include all forms of sculpture in his analysis of early spatial representation in *Perspective as Symbolic Form* but made no real theoretical distinction between fictive space in two and three dimensions: sculpture figures in his narrative only as a steppingstone toward linear perspective; it is excluded entirely from his discussion of developed perspective, and it is not clear how it might be included.

Bunim did not comment on sculpture.

White did not treat sculpture as a separate field (but did offer comments on perspectival effects in Donatello’s relief sculpture).

Richard Krautheimer considered the basics of perspectival construction in mixed relief

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589 See my n.569.

590 This paradox is starker in theory than in practice: distortive sculpture (like painting) appeals not just to one disembodied viewpoint, but creates what Baxandall dubs an ‘arc of address’, a directional but general appeal to viewing from a swathe of possible positions: Baxandall 1982, 172.

591 A number of scholars have commented on instances where distortive sculpture requires or permits a mobile viewer: White, for example, noticed that Donatello’s reliefs were displayed in such ways that they are most often seen from ‘incorrect’ points and thus challenged the practical necessity of the coincidence of the viewer and the intended viewpoint. White 1987, 192–96; similarly Munman 1985a. The key texts in the emerging literature on mobile spectatorship are Lubbock 2006, 115–45; Jung 2013; Johnson 2013; Lakey 2018a.

592 Christopher Wood and Christopher Lakey both note that the passages about sculpture in *Perspective as Symbolic Form* are not really about ‘perspective’ at all: Lakey 2018b, 123.

593 Krautheimer 1941, 179.

594 White 1987, 274ff. These questions were revisited by Rosenauer 1975; also Munman 1985b.
in his 1956 study of Ghiberti but did not consider the beholder’s position.\footnote{Krautheimer 1982, 229–56.} Jules Lubbock described Pisano’s use of foreshortening techniques in sculpture as appealing to certain viewing positions.\footnote{Lubbock 2006, 86–91, 119.} But until Summers’ \textit{Real Spaces} there had been no attempt at a general theory of sculptural perspective; scholars dealt instead with individual instances. Lakey’s \textit{Sculptural Seeing} is the most courageous attempt to date to make the Panofskian paradigm interact with the emerging discourse on embodied beholding.\footnote{Lakey 2018a.} There remains a need for diachronic thinking about the problem of space in sculpture; such thinking must be properly attentive not only to the facts of embodied perception but to the fluid dynamics of mobile spectatorship.

The perspective paradigm, with its normative focus on linear perspective, is not easily compatible with embodied beholding. Traditional perspectival theory is primarily concerned with the construction rather than the perception of images.\footnote{In Belting’s words, ‘Panofsky ‘based his study on space, rather than the gaze’: Belting 2011, 16.} In complex, multi-perspectival scenarios such as frescoed ceilings and multi-panelled fonts, where a moving viewer discovers different views as they proceed, the work is too often treated as offering a succession of fixed perspectives rather than a fluid phenomenal experience of roaming between them in real space in what Merleau-Ponty called ‘the flesh of the world’.\footnote{For examples of these successive perspectives, S. Alpers and Baxandall 1994; and Jung 2013. For the quotation see Merleau-Ponty 1968; cited by Jay 1988, 18.} This tendency persists even where scholars are aware of its pitfalls: there is no room in the linear-perspectival analytical paradigm for temporal change, for flitting eyes (let alone moving persons), and this problem is exacerbated when sculpture is involved because of its three-dimensionality, which cannot be grasped as such other than by embodied persons and cannot be explored other than temporally.\footnote{Some recent scholarship, however, does insist on the primacy of experience: see for example Gastel 2011.} My thesis in this chapter is that imagining a kind of phenomenological, mobile, sculptural beholding (or
‘perspective’) is central to interpreting the idiom in question. I will move towards a better definition of this distinctive mode.

Sculptural seeing

Christopher Lakey has, more than any other scholar in the field, interrogated the difficult interaction of Panofsky’s thesis with late medieval relief sculpture. Lakey’s contribution to the ongoing discourse around sculptural perspective is significant but not unproblematic. His diagnosis of the historiographical problem is accurate, but very often his suggested alternative concepts resemble too closely their discredited forebears. Mindful of the need to consider the embodied spectator, for example, Lakey prefers the term ‘standpoint’ to the abstracted ‘point of view’; his analysis nevertheless often consists of a series of specific ‘standpoints’ and rarely describes the qualia of a spectator moving through space.

Lakey is largely supportive of Panosky’s broad teleology (of the gradual expansion of regularized space in High Gothic relief sculpture), but suggests that modifications ought to be made if the theory is to accommodate discussion of the historical beholder’s embodied viewing, to which Panofsky is (in that essay) largely blind. He attempts to reorganise Panofsky’s thesis to make it a theory of ‘the gaze’ and not merely a theory of ‘space’.

This is one of the problems with the perspective paradigm as it stands: it does not account for bodies in space or for the tension between representation and reality that can be bridged by understanding the subtle ways in which the art of the Middle Ages encouraged participation from the beholder outside of the pictorial frame.

602 For his diagnosis of the problem see Lakey 2018a, 1–18.
603 Lakey 2018a, 17; following Davis 2018, 36.
604 Lakey 2015, 123.
Panofsky’s lack of attention to the beholder’s position means that he is completely inattentive to the angle from which a Romanesque relief, for example, would be perceived. Lakey’s proffered solution is to modify (but in so doing uphold) the Panofskian concept of the *Raumkasten* (space box), by exploding its fourth wall to include the real space in which the viewer stands in the analysis, allowing discussion of relationships based on the viewer’s distance, point of view, and scale. He argues that, as well as supposedly normative, static beholding, ‘dynamic encounters between beholders and images in the Middle Ages were similarly inscribed into the representational model’; ‘monumental art of the Middle Ages encouraged beholders to take up multiple standpoints’. And yet, the sculptural examples that Lakey marshals (apart from the Pisano pulpit already examined by Jules Lubbock) seem not to provide for much in the way of ‘dynamic encounter’, and instead comprise instances of optical adjustment where sculpture is foreshortened to produce a specific effect from a specified position. This is due in part to Lakey’s choice of object domain, since the reliefs at Ferrara and Modena are rather mural. The extreme convexity of the Norwich sculpture seems to offer a more dynamic case study of the kinds of viewing at which Lakey is hinting.

Spatial representation in sculpture is, I have argued, complex theoretical territory, and a significant lacuna in existing scholarship. I have identified two related problems:

1. The tendency to judge medieval (and all pre-modern) representational strategies against Renaissance norms, seeing them as part of a teleology.

2. The philosophical impossibility of analysing qualia objectively.

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605 Lakey 2015, 123, echoing Hegel’s notion of the spectator “in it from the beginning”.
606 For example, the Niccolo relief at Ferrara, subject of Lakey 2015, 126–31; and 2018b. For the Pisano pulpits in Pisa and Pistoia see Lakey 2018a, 146–50; following Lubbock 2006, 115–45.
Both seem to persist in Lakey’s work to some degree, despite his rigorous framing of this historiographical problem. Fundamentally, he maintains a model in which medieval perspective (both in practice and in theory) prepares the ground for the arrival of perspective proper, making important ‘contributions’ but still playing second fiddle to the Albertian paradigm. And we are still faced (and perhaps always will be faced) with the irreducibility of the qualia of embodied experience to any reductive, systematic model of beholding. I pursue this incompatibility of systematic description and non-systematic phenomena in the following section.

7.2 Systematic vs. non-systematic ‘perspective’

In the previous section I outlined the significant theoretical and historiographical problems around questions perspective in sculpture. These problems arise when we try to consider the experience of an embodied beholder in real space.

Briefly disregarding the beholder’s ‘gaze’, however, ought we not to be able to describe the pictorial ‘space’ of the bosses (however bizarre) as a kind of ‘perspective’, a formulaic compression or projection of pictorial space? Any projection of coordinates from one space onto another plane or space can be described as a mathematical function, as a kind of morphism. The basic equation is \( P = f(X) \), where \( X \) is the point of an object in real space and \( P \) is its final position on the picture plane (or in a three-dimensional relief space) and \( f \) is the perspectival function. Perspectives of 1-6 vanishing points are all functions capable of being described in this way, as are anamorphic and graduated perspectives; it is also possible to describe systematic perspectival sculpture in this fashion. Can the bosses cutters’ method be described as a repeatable perspectival function along these lines? I will consider a number of possible ‘functions’ and discuss their relevance to the Norwich sculptures.

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607 Lakey 2018a, 1.
608 See for example the work of Fréchet: Fréchet 1928. Morphism is a basic algebraic principle applicable to metric spaces, vector spaces, and topological spaces.
Curvilinear perspective

Curvilinear perspective (sometimes ‘synthetic’ perspective) has a number of variants which differ in their precise construction. But the basic characteristic of all these perspectives is that they feature foreshortening not only into the picture plane, but also horizontally and vertically across it, which is only possible when curves are employed instead of straight lines [Fig.236]. They all rely on the projection of proportions obtained by the intersection of a concave surface and the visual pyramid. They have even occasionally been argued to be more ‘truthful’ than linear perspective, where ‘truthful’ is used to mean corresponding to the impression of light inside a curving eyeball, or (more ambiguous philosophically) what we ‘really see’. Very few artists in the European tradition put curvilinear perspective into practice, but the work of Jean Fouquet seems to evidence something like this approach to curvature [Fig.237].

Despite his personal preference for schematic clarity, John White saw curvilinear perspective to be a ‘genuinely valid’ alternative system for the construction of pictorial space. A number of scholars before him and after him have defended its theoretical legitimacy. Flocon and Hansen both advocated the flattening of the visual globe resulting in an idiosyncratic construction resembling a fish-eye photograph; Rudolph Arnheim noted that this system is ‘an alternative, not an improvement’ but that it nevertheless somehow captures something of the ‘vital kinetic experience’ and ‘voluptuousness’ of experienced perception, with its swelling centre: curved lines, he notes, tend to read as a swelling form, bulging towards us. Indeed, something approximating curvilinear perspective was used by artists such as Van Eyck and

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609 For the details see Barre and Flocon 1967; Hansen 1973; Arnheim 1974; Elkins 1988.
610 White 1987, 207.
612 White 1987, 274.
614 Arnheim 1974, 424.
Parmigianino to render the reflections produced in convex mirrors [Fig.233, 238]. The technique certainly yields a curvaceous, rhythmic quality.615

And yet, despite the superficial visual resemblance between curvilinear-perspectival images and our bosses, it is not at all clear how ideas of curvilinear perspective could transfer to a sculptural context. Photographs of the bosses may resemble curvilinear pictorial space in their curvature, but we must remember that bosses are not photographs and exist in three dimensions: the diminution of forms towards their periphery is exaggerated by our choice of photographic perspective, and the effect can be counteracted from an oblique viewpoint. The boss sculptors’ idiom does share with curvilinear perspective, however, a willingness to sacrifice the ‘realism’ of straight lines in pursuit of a cohesive, curving visual language.

**Six-point perspective**

Curvilinear perspective is sometimes referred to as ‘five-point perspective’. By adopting a sixth vanishing point it is even possible to render an entire visual sphere, which can be projected into two dimensions by stereographic projection (producing a single circle) or by orthographic projection (producing two circles). It also is possible to construct visual hemispheres or spheres in three dimensions by this technique.616 Contemporary artist Dick Termes employs a ‘twelve-point’ technique to produce whole visual spheres [Fig.239]. These spheres are a systematic projection of space across a convex surface, and in their convexity and curvature some resemble the most linear of the bosses. They recall some of the earliest ‘perspectival’ artefacts discussed by White, who touched on

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615 Otto Pächt diagnosed an attention to surface patterning in Fouquet’s work which he believed related to a sense of the ceremonial: Pächt 1940, 96–97.
616 In practice the latter amounts to two separate five-point perspective exercises. See Veltman 2004, 196–97; also Gunn 2013.
the issue of representing pictorial space on the convex surfaces of amphorae.617 But for all that they superficially resemble the Norwich bosses, there is a crucial difference: Termes’ projection is systematic in a way that the boss cutters’ is not.

This is the fundamental flaw in both the preceding comparisons between our sculptural idiom and systematic types of perspective: all perspectival systems are (at least in theory) systematic, and yield space which is isotropic. Our sculptural idiom, however, is not systematic, and its space is anisotropic. Where the diminution or curvature of forms is more or less regular it is tempting to begin tracing orthogonals in order to diagnose a ‘system’ - but in doing so we can only find inexact patterns to which many objects refuse to conform [Fig.240].

To attempt to systematise a non-systematic paradigm is anachronistic, a ‘land grab’ for perspectival studies, a kind of conceptual colonialism under which the authentic other will be reduced and degraded to suit the dominance narratives of the conquering system.618 As Curtius remarked of literary ‘unnaturalness’, ‘it is shortsighted and useless to reduce mannerism to a system, as has been done again and again’.619 Instead we must begin to treat medieval sculptural space on its own, anisotropic terms.

A distinctive characteristic of our sculptural idiom, then, is the fact that it defies systematic explanation. There are certainly clear tendencies and flirtations with patterned distortion but these do not amount to a rigorous system. In the misericord ‘Death comes to a rich man’ there is a clear sense of objects receding towards the two corners, even if this recession is not systematic [Fig.195]; in boss NB4 we find lines following a regular, curving pattern, producing a swelling, bulging effect, but close inspection reveals this space to be more episodic than systematic [Fig.240]. Likewise, the

617 White 1987, 237–48. Bernard Andreae has also considered the spatial characteristics of amphorae paintings, noting that these were more ‘effective’ on the original vase than when ‘unrolled’ onto a flat surface: Andreae 1958.
619 Curtius 2013, 273–82.
instances of ‘splaying’ described in bosses such as WI4 [Fig.241] are isolated occurrences even in the spatial logic of the bosses in which they reside. We begin to see that, for all the sense of spatial flow and patterning, our idiom is in fact improvisational: objects are rendered with certain faces twisted this way and that at the behest of the artist.

The same tension between unsystematic space and systematic description is evident in the scholarly discourse around the so-called ‘inverse’ or ‘reverse’ perspective characteristic of Russian/Byzantine icon painting. Broadly speaking, this ‘perspective’ is considered an ‘inversion’ of conventional linear perspective because the orthogonals of depicted objects diverge (rather than converge) as they recede: the parallel lines of the world converge on the viewer’s eye and splay into the distance, rather than converging on a vanishing point and splaying towards the eye. A range of ‘distortions’ are produced depending on the projection system and its relationship to convexity and concavity. Discussion of inverse perspective is technically and philosophically difficult, and the field is in ‘a deep intellectual mess’. A key problem is whether it is at all accurate to conceive of reverse perspective as a ‘reverse’ of Renaissance norms, or whether to do so is to restrict our understanding of its effect to the limitations of the Renaissance paradigm. Whilst individual objects can be projected onto a surface systematically in this method, the representation of whole scenes tends to be episodic and anisotropic, much like the pictorial space of the bosses.

How can we to refer to the kinds of ‘perspective’ generated by these non-systematic approaches to spatial representation without reference to the paradigm of linear perspective? Perhaps some degree of anachronism is inevitable. I have argued that any representation in two or three dimensions (other than sculpture in the round) is

620 For a summary of the debate see Antonova 2010; 2016, 29–62. The foundational text is Florensky 2002b.
621 For the details see Antonova 2016, 48–49.
622 Antonova 2010, 468.
distortive, and that the viewer is therefore ‘in it from the beginning’, and that these are therefore kinds of ‘perspective’; but in being anisotropic and in anticipating mobile viewing these perspectives are utterly unlike the systematic perspectives to which we are accustomed. In lieu of better terminology I propose that this idiom could usefully be referred to a kind of mixed perspective, mobile perspective, or, with sculptural stress, a kind of malleable perspective. The latter term communicates the mixture of rhythmic regularity and freedom in distortion which so many of my examples evince, but risks implying a renaissance ‘norm’ which has been softened and distorted.

Positive stances towards anisotropic space

The historic hegemony of linear perspective has meant that free spatial manipulation has often been assumed to be naïve. Hogarth’s ‘Satire on False Perspective’ sends up such spatial errors as evidence of incompetence [Fig.242]: the accompanying inscription reads ‘Whoever makes a design without the Knowledge of perspective will be liable to such Absurdities as are shown in this Frontispiece’ [emphases original]. Interestingly, a number of these ‘absurdities’ mimic (albeit in two dimensions) effects evident in the bosses: splayed barrels show both their ends at once; the parallel lines of buildings diverge [Fig.233,244].

Is there a difference between incorrect perspectival representation and non-systematic perspectival representation? It has long been recognised, for example, that much pre-modern representation uses variations in relative scale to stress relative importance. But are equivalent principles applicable to the more complex matter of spatial projection? Only a few scholars have tried to treat free, anisotropic renderings of space as positive and intentional. I will briefly survey the ways in which this has been done.

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624 For example, Bunim 1940, 5–7.
Some scholars have recognized that anisotropic renderings of objects have the potential to ‘show more’ than we would otherwise see. Samuel Edgerton’s account of perspectival development is orthodox, and he maintains the usual correlation between linear perspective and the scientific method, but he is also interested in how we might credit non-systematic approaches to representation with some positive epistemological stance. He describes crude early medieval geometrical diagrams positively, as attempts towards a kind of clarity which the perspective model could never produce: some show cylinders with circles at both ends, connected by parallel sides, whereas a perspectival drawing could only render one circular and imply the occluded other [Fig.245].

Such drawings make a different kind of ‘truth claim’, sacrificing ‘realism’ in the process. Edgerton finds many examples of ‘splaying’ in diagrammatic and technical drawing in the fifteenth century, where artists such as Taccola pursued this sort of clarity [Fig.246]. Otto Pächt diagnosed a similar willingness to distort in order to reveal in various ‘Giottesque’ English works, such as the Egerton Genesis: a ‘flat unfolding of space’ in which those parts of objects which lie behind the picture plane are simply lifted upwards ‘in order to present themselves properly to the spectator’ [Fig.247]. Edgerton and Pächt each recognized a tendency to want to ‘show more’ for the sake of clarity and completeness (i.e., *copia*). A good example, local to the bosses, of such diagrammatic clarity can be found in the Norwich-Sarum processional from the Great Hospital of St Giles. Here clergy are represented in a kind of ‘bird’s-eye’ view, reduced to pictograms of their tonsured heads seen from above; the chalices, candlesticks and other liturgical props are each shown floating in their most ‘conceptually prominent’ elevation [Fig.248].

‘Realism’ is sacrificed in pursuit of instructional clarity.

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626 Edgerton 1991, 108–47. For Taccola, see 126-131. These drawings show a constant willingness to twist and manipulate, showing you what you need to see.
627 Pächt 1943, 64.
628 British Library Ad. MS 57534.
629 For ‘conceptual prominence’ see Bunim 1940, 7.
Other scholars have focused on the extent to which the supposed ‘accuracy’ of linear perspective relies on a massively impoverished definition of visual experience: real experience is mobile, varifocal, flitting, binocular and therefore three-dimensional, temporal, and perpetually pregnant with cognition. As Gombrich puts it, there is an ‘immense gulf that separates our experience of the real world and the flat surface on which it is to be depicted.’\textsuperscript{630} Periods of Western art which evidence a preference for representing the ‘qualia’ of experience over the geometrical abstraction of rigid perspective appear as oases in an otherwise arid landscape. Svetlana Alpers juxtaposed Italian geometrical ‘representation’ and Northern phenomenological ‘description’ (an ‘absorptive’ ‘image making’ that describes ‘fragments’ of the world) in \textit{The Art of Describing}.\textsuperscript{631} Alpers’ argument is reminiscent of Riegl’s, who juxtaposed the ideal, disembodied beholder of Italian perspective and the Northern assumption of a physical, embodied beholder: Italian pictures show ‘the world seen’, Northern pictures suggest ‘I see the world’.\textsuperscript{632} In a similar way, following Merleau-Ponty’s analysis, Cézanne’s perspectival nonconformity tends to be seen as being bound up with a kind of phenomenology, an attempt to render the object-in-itself through the experience of the subject.\textsuperscript{633} Cubism, too, has been said to begin with a dissatisfaction with conventional representation’s reductive rendering of embodied experience, and to be an attempt to render more truthfully the fragmentary nature of embodied perception, correlating with moves towards relativity in contemporary science.\textsuperscript{634} In this model, then, artists who flout perspectival conventions (or who simply work outside them) do so in pursuit of something else: the paradoxical rendering of subjective, embodied experience within the limits of a finite, objective medium.

\textsuperscript{630} Gombrich 1987, 11.
\textsuperscript{631} S. L. Alpers 1983.
\textsuperscript{632} Woodfield 2013, 234.
\textsuperscript{633} Merleau-Ponty 1964. This influenced Boris Rauschenbach, and Paul Smith: P. Smith 2013; Rauschenbach 1982.
\textsuperscript{634} Steinberg 1988, 31–33, 46; 1978, 114–27. Also Francastel 1965, 17, 141–222. For the comparison with mysticism see Florensky 2002a; and Antonova 2010, 467.
Likewise, scholars of ‘inverse perspective’, in addressing its radical difference to Renaissance norms, have sometimes seen it as a reflection of an alternative epistemological stance rather than being simply naïve. ‘Inverse perspective’ is a strategy invested in epistemological paradox, showing more from one ‘perspective’ than could be seen from one ‘perspective’ - and so for Pavel Florensky it amounted to an attempt to represent transcendent, mystical experience.635

Even Panofsky also briefly acknowledged the possibility of a radically alternative notion of sculptural viewing, in his Early Netherlandish Painting.636 Alongside ‘very flat relief in which figures and ground seem to be unified’ and ‘theatrical effects in stagelike spaces’, he also mentioned a very different paradigm of sculptural representation at work in some fourteenth-century Northern sculpture: ‘instead of presenting to the beholder a perspective image which they, the sculptors, had managed to transpose into a plastic medium, they supplied him with plastic materials which he, the beholder, had to coordinate into a perspective image’.637 In such cases the spectator is asked and enabled to construct a quasi-pictorial image in their mind’s eye, from the plastic forms provided by the sculptor. The mobile viewer gradually explores the sculpture: this recalls Panofsky’s general characterisation of the late-Gothic ‘baroque’ as a style ‘more concerned with becoming than being’, preferring ‘contortion to composure, complexity and involution to simplicity and clearness, oblique recession into space to frontality, the ‘open’ form, vis. incompleteness and asymmetry, to the ‘closed’.”638 This appealing, Riegl-ian/Wölfflinian characterisation seems very apt for our sculptural idiom. And yet, it is something of a dead-end in Panofsky’s larger argument, and is incompatible with

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635 Florensky 2002b. Other scholars have occasionally seen perspectival ‘errors’ as intentional, implying a ‘visionary’ or ‘oneiric’ mode: see Owen 2016, 139–45.
636 Panofsky 1971, 1:76–78. These remarks have, it seems, escaped notice in the current literature on sculpture, perspective and mobile viewing.
637 Panofsky 1971, 1:15, 76–78.
638 Panofsky 1971, 1:345.
the teleological model of his 1927 perspective essay. These remarks do not seem to have been expanded upon by Panofsky elsewhere or by subsequent scholars of sculpture and perspective.

These different treatments of anisotropic pictorial (and, in Panofsky’s case, sculptural) space offer starting points for a way of thinking about our sculptural idiom as something positive, a way of ‘showing more’ and rendering in a small space a greater richness of informative angles and perspectives than could be achieved by any systematic means, responding to the conditions of embodied, mobile spectatorship in the process and offering the beholder an exploratory, participatory role in the dialogue. Such interpretive treatments as I have mentioned (Edgerton’s, Alpers’, Florensky’s) tend, in Panofskian fashion, to begin to draw comparisons between representational strategies and epistemological stances of the periods that produced them. In the final section of this chapter, then, I will consider possible parallelisms which could be drawn between late medieval epistemology and our sculptural idiom.

7.3 Epistemological parallels

The strategy of drawing parallels between representational practice and other contemporaneous epistemological concepts is contentious. Gombrich stressed that perspective is ‘just’ a technique, not a manifestation of a Weltanschauung.\textsuperscript{639} E. de Jongh, similarly, diagnosed a Hegelian, collectivistic determinism in Alpers’ willingness to describe certain visual dispositions as ‘typically Dutch’.\textsuperscript{640} The field can almost be split into two camps: those for whom perspectival strategies are ‘just technique’, and those interested in perspective’s connections to the history of ideas. This thesis tentatively entertains the possibility of such connections.

\textsuperscript{639} This ought to be seen as part of his criticism of Germanic collectivizing concepts: Gombrich 2009, 250; 2009, 257; Elkins 1994, 17.
\textsuperscript{640} de Jongh 1984, 53.
Having examined the ways in which the modern scholarly discourse around ‘perspective’ has the potential to mislead, we might look to the work of medieval ‘perspectivist’ scholars for less anachronistic ways of thinking about points of view, subject-object relationships, vision and epistemology. It has often been argued that the perspectival inventions of the fifteenth century have their foundations in the optical/metaphysical discussions of the previous centuries. Bacon, Grosseteste, Ockham, and Peter Aureol, for example, stressed (in different ways) the difference between things as they appear (esse apparens) and things as they objectively are (esse reale), and noted the conditions necessary (correct distance, correct lighting) for normal, veridical perception. Concern for the conditions under which veridical perception can be achieved, the argument goes, eventually bore fruit in linear perspective, a systematic way of achieving these conditions: even some medieval sculpture, according to Lakey, evidences a similar pursuit of optimum viewing conditions, since sculptures are designed to offer realism from one predetermined position as in perspective proper.

There was, however, another more sceptical strand of late medieval optical/epistemological thought concerning point-of-view. Peter of Limoges’s treatise De Oculo Morali treated vision as an extended metaphor for spiritual knowledge. This was widely disseminated and preached in England, and could have been familiar to the Norwich Benedictines. Peter differed from earlier perspectivists (tacitly but fundamentally) in that he believed even normal vision to be fraught with error. His predecessors’ interest in errors was limited to understanding what was going wrong when vision failed (Vitelo, for example, warned of the distortion that could be caused by reflection, refraction, and oblique vision). But for Peter, the perceptual errors caused by

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641 For an overview see A. M. Smith 1981; Lindberg 1976. For the early perspectivists, see Tachau 1988. For later medieval developments, particularly relevant here, I have used Denery 2005.
642 For example, Edgerton 1991; Tachau 1988; a trend diagnosed by Denery 2005, 170.
644 For discussion see Denery 2005, 75–116; for the text itself, Peter 2012. Interest in the text is growing among scholars: see Kessler, Newhauser, and Russell 2018.
645 On the dissemination of the manuscript, see Newhauser 2013.
oblique vision are not exceptions but rather the norm of vision. Clear and direct vision, both moral and physical, could not be obtained in this world: the ‘direct’ vision of the perspectivists would only be available after Resurrection, and until then we have to make do with reflected, refracted vision. 'In this life our spiritual vision is weakened, its objects deformed and distorted as they reflect against the flawed mirror of our sinful nature.' As Dallas G Denery explains, 'Peter’s normalization of deformations within the moral-perceptual process is an acknowledgment that every perceptual act takes place from within a given perspective'. This is amounts to an extreme awareness of epistemological point-of-view (‘perspectivism’, as it would later be dubbed): ‘every perceptual act is conditioned and potentially skewed by the unique circumstances in which it occurs’. Optical distortions in the world offered Peter analogies for the difficulty of accurate self-knowledge: mirrors which reverse sight illustrate the way we tend to pursue goals opposite to God’s; water which magnifies illustrates the distortions of scale to which we are prone when evaluating our sins. God’s sight is perfect, like an eye placed at the centre of a mirrored ball, in perfect self-knowledge and omniscience, whereas we see only distortions, glimpsed from our post-lapsarian position on the fringes.

Peter, then, was acutely aware of the continual failure of our vision: in his model, we are forever displaced, pushed to the fringes and seeing only partial truths, forever denied the total knowledge of the sphere’s centre. This certainly resonates with the Norwich

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646 Denery 2005, 80–81.
648 Denery 2005, 106.
649 Denery 2005, 112.
651 Tractatus, VI.8, and Denery 2005, 75–76. For the idea of an eye at the centre of a mirrored sphere see Pecham 1970, 192–94.
652 Peter’s final pessimism about the possibility of a contingent subject gaining any objective knowledge makes him a thinker for our times: for a post-truth age, where subjective experience trumps objective data and objectivity itself is in a state of philosophical crisis.
bosses – a viewer circles around the boss, but is denied total comprehension from any single point. There is also an echo, in the bosses’ convex forms, of a distorting concave mirror or mirrored sphere. Like Peter, it seems the boss carvers were aware (consciously or unconsciously) of the distortion which is the inescapable norm of embodied perception; unlike the Florentine pioneers of linear perspective, they did not respond to that awareness by reducing subjectivity to one fixed, abstract point, but instead responded to it creatively. If all human vision is partial, contingent, more or less distorted, and subject to change, the sculptor might as well offer sculptures which respond to this partiality, contingency and change, appealing to a range of possible viewpoints.

Another scholastic thinker, Nicholas of Autrecourt, made an even more iconoclastic critique of perspectivism, and began with the assumption that everything which appears exists: appearances (phenomena) are not errors, but each reveals some aspect of the thing-in-itself (res extra).

Although any given subjectively existing thing is a unity, it has many different appearances: it can, after all, be seen from any number of positions, under any number of circumstances, and from each of these positions it will appear differently to the viewer. A patch of whiteness (Nicholas’ example) can be seen from close up or from afar, in a strong or in a weak light; it can appear brighter or dimmer - and since everything that appears is true, each one of these ‘appearances’ discloses some truth about the white patch. ‘Whiteness’ must contain as part of its formal definition every ‘appearance’ it might disclose to the perceiver, and since the white patch can sometimes appear to be black, Nicholas contends that the singular subjectively existing thing can encompass opposed traits. ‘Contraries’, Nicholas notes, ‘co-exist’ [et sic contraria et

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653 They also resemble Alhacen’s perceptual model, in De Aspectibus (which was the basis for Bacon’s species theory), in which the perpendicular visual ray is comprehended but the oblique rays are refracted and disregarded: there is a concern for the central focus and peripheral distortion of ordinary sight, absent from the Renaissance model. See Denery 2005, 85.

There is, therefore, an objective truth to any res extra, which no single perspective will adequately capture: this is a kind of perspectival apophaticism or mysticism. It is not hard to see how such an epistemological stance could be analogous to a representational strategy which attempts to show contraries coexisting, or which demands that the viewer adopt a number of points of view in order to begin to see the truth of thing-in-itself. We ought to remember here the tactic of ‘showing more’, of splayed, mixed perspective employed in pursuit of holistic description (consider the instances of ‘splaying’ described in Chapter 2.2; boss NH7 seems to illustrate Nicholas’ concern with mutually occluding faces). Nicholas, however, is a deeply problematic source: he faced condemnation, and had to recant many of his theses. Whereas it is likely that Peter of Limoges’ Tractatus was known in Norwich, the same cannot be said for Nicholas’ Exegit. His work nonetheless evidences ideas which were possible (if not permissible) developments of some of the issues raised by perspectivist subject/object & reale/apparens problems.

Similar ideas resurfaced in the more orthodox work of the fifteenth-century German Nicholas of Cusa, particularly his text De Visione Dei. Like Peter of Limoges, Nicholas juxtaposed impoverished human sight and transcendent divine omniscience:

‘It belongs to sight in its contracted being that while it regards one thing it cannot also look on another or on all things absolutely. God, however, as God is true uncontracted sight, is not less than what the intellect can conceive of abstract sight, but God is incomparably more perfect.’

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656 Consider for example Kant’s radical subjectivism, and his posited transcendental perspective. This ‘apophatic’ approach, where objective reality exists but is never graspable from a contingent position, differs from contemporary post-structural ‘radical relativism’, in that it does not challenge the existence of an objective reality but rather our capacity to grasp such a reality (it critiques epistemological objectivity, not ontological objectivity). See Elkins 1994, 20–21, on the relationship between perspectivism and Nietzsche’s rejection of scientific objectivity. See also contemporary arguments for and against ‘objective’ perspectives: Moore 2000; Nagel 1989, respectively.
657 Cusanus 1997, 237.
Quite explicitly, Nicholas undermined the notion of divine sight as a ‘point of view’ in the sense of being an angle of sight onto an objective reality:

‘Your eye reaches toward all things without turning. Our eye must turn itself toward an object because of the quantum angle of our vision. But the angle of your vision, O God, is not quantum but infinite. It is also a circle, or rather, an infinite sphere because your sight is an eye of sphericity and infinite perfection. For your sight sees all things simultaneously around above and below.’

Again, we find the language of sphericity associated with these problems of ‘point of view’. Static beholding is the preserve of the divine, while the human subject’s imperfect, ‘quantum’ vision forces them to turn, moving continually around the fringes of perception, just as a viewer is forced to move continually in order to comprehend the bosses.

The concerns of these theologians, to do with the contingency and partiality of human sight as compared to the omniscience of God, relate more broadly to long established mystical tropes such the *kataskopos*, the mystical flight of the soul in which ordinary vision is transcended and a divine perspective is briefly attained or imagined. This long literary-philosophical tradition has distinct hallmarks relevant to the present thesis: alongside descriptions of ascent to high places we find paradoxical zooming in *while* zooming out, capturing at once the broadest overview and the most infinitesimal detail. Omniscience transcends human imagination, and so its fictive description tends feature ‘impossible’ combination and mixture: the macro *mixed* with the micro; magnification *mixed* with diminution. Few scholars have considered how these paradoxes of divine

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658 Cusanus 1997, 249.
sight might relate to representational strategies, but it seems possible to suggest that our mixed sculptural perspective appeals to a loosely analogous wish to compile contradictory views, transcending the limitations of a single, fixed perspective.660

Conclusion

All distortive sculpture is perspectival, in that it anticipates certain kinds of viewing. The viewer is ‘in it from the beginning’, and in the case of the Norwich bosses this viewer is a mobile viewer. Mobile viewing is poorly theorised in existing scholarship, as is medieval, non-systematic representation, which appears naïve when set against Renaissance ‘norms’, but is perhaps intentional and eloquent on its own terms.

Late medieval theologians such as Peter of Limoges and Nicholas of Cusa emphasised the multiplicity of possible perspectives onto any object, each of which contributed something to the gradual discovery (always incomplete and always distorted) of the thing-in-itself. It is therefore tempting observe a correlation between their optics/epistemology and an approach to sculptural form which tolerated multiple, contradictory perspectives. By doing so we cannot suggest direct vectors of influence, but can follow Dallas G. Denery’s diagnosis of a ‘broader cultural and religious discourse’ around notions of appearance and existence, adopting a stance which ‘neither overly defines lines of influence, nor seeks to understand the concerns of early artists in terms taken from later centuries.’661 Having examined the pitfalls of applying notions of systematic pictorial space to sculptures which are non-systematic, we can agree on the need to find less anachronistic concepts for artworks which intend a different kind of subject-object relationship. We can begin to find period terms in late-medieval thought.

660 Kupfer, leaning on the work of Gautier Delaché, considers the Hereford map to be a rendering of a divine perspective: see Kupfer 2016, 56 and passim. Likewise, Joseph Koerner sees Bosch’s ‘Seven Deadly Sins’ as a pictorial kataskopos: Koerner 2014, 317. Circularity, as discussed in Chapter 6, is a common feature of these allegedly ‘kataskopos’ images.

661 Denery 2005, 172.
for a mixed perspective of refraction \([\text{refractio}]\), distortion \([\text{perversitas}]\), and magnification \([\text{magnificatio}]\), a perspective in which ‘contraries coexist’ \([\text{et sic contraria et simul}]\).

Further, it seems possible to set this correlation (of ‘mixed perspective’ and late-medieval optics/epistemology) alongside the existing correlation, drawn by Panofsky and others, between an early modern European preference for synopsis and clarity and the contemporaneous prizing of systematic perspective.\(^{662}\) Whereas critics in other periods praised images comprehensible ‘in a single glance’, the sculptural idiom epitomized in the Norwich bosses frustrates such synoptic ambition - just as contemporary theologians stressed the potential for single, post-lapsarian glances to mislead. Such a comparison is only gestural, but it speaks to the grand sweep of Panofsky’s claims around perspective and \textit{Weltanschauung} while also nuancing them, reading medieval sculptural strategies not as preparatory steps toward Renaissance discoveries but as their own distinctive and playful solutions to problems of subjectivity and perception.

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\(^{662}\) For this classical trope see, for example, Aristotle’s \textit{Poetics}, 7.1450-1: a beautiful thing of any sort, especially that assembled from other component things, ought to have the right magnitude (\textit{megethos}) and orderliness (\textit{taxis}) to be easily seen in a single glance (\textit{eusynopton}). Cited in Purves 2010, 30–31.
Conclusions

This thesis, focussed on the Norwich cloister bosses but concerned to situate them within the broader landscape of fifteenth-century English sculpture, has drawn a number of conclusions at different investigative levels, some empirically grounded and archaeological, others more speculative and hermeneutic.

At an archaeological level, it has been possible to clarify the construction sequence of the Norwich cloister and to affirm Arthur Whittingham’s reading of the dating of the later walks, noting the priority of the north walk over the west walk. A picture of an episodic, iterative design process has emerged, whereby teams of masons and sculptors working centuries apart maintained the tierceron-star vault pattern devised c.1300 but imagined fresh solutions to the distribution of sculpture across the vaults’ bosses, fresh iconographical schemes, and fresh advancements of the developing sculptural idiom, in each generation. This mixed concern for continuity of construction on the one hand and renewal and innovation on the other is consistent with the Benedictine approach to structural maintenance described by Julian Luxford.663

A key contribution to knowledge has been to link the fifteenth-century bosses of the Norwich cloister to a network of other sites with distinctive boss sculpture in Norfolk. The ‘Five Joys’ group of porches, the chantry at the Great Hospital, and a number of other parish churches in the region, have not previously been considered as a cohesive group, but can now be understood as part of a thriving tradition of sculpted stone tierceron-star vaults of the mid-fifteenth century. The close iconographical and idiomatic connections between the ‘Five Joys’ porches, particularly, suggest direct transfer of either of workmen, models or ideas from site to site.

663 Luxford 2012, 204.
It has also been possible to situate the development of this distinctive idiom of boss sculpture within the broader context of English boss sculpture. I have noted similarities between the Norwich fourteenth-century work and work elsewhere in the British Isles, but I have also argued for the special status of the Norwich fifteenth-century work, which represents a qualitative step-change in the developing tradition of sophisticated hemispherical sculpture. Why this tradition bloomed in and around Norwich and not elsewhere in the south of England to the same extent remains a matter of conjecture, but is perhaps related to geographical factors (such as the presence of continental craftsmen) and the timing and scale of a significant project such as the Norwich cloister, which offered a monumental sandbox in which boss carvers could experiment and hone pre-existing elements of an incipient tradition before finding further employment at other local sites.

This thesis has also touched on that perennial theme in the study of English art, the notion of insularity. It has, admittedly, dealt with a particularly English genre of sculpture, the sculpted roof boss; already acknowledged to be largely an English phenomenon, my East Anglian focus has given further regional specificity to a particular idiom within the tradition of English sculpted bosses. I have also argued that this idiom of spatial playfulness, which is not naivety but rather a kind of mannerism, is itself a particularly English development, perhaps indebted to the pattern-driven, rhythmic sculptural compositions of the Hiberno-Saxon tradition. At the same time, however, I have noted the manifold stylistic and socio-economic links between East Anglian and Brabantine/Netherlandish work of this period, finding close parallels for the bosses in sculpture from Leuven and Brussels, and documentary evidence to support the notion of a transfer of workmen from these regions to Norwich. In short, I have not found the traditional ‘insularity/connectedness’ dichotomy to be helpful in my discussion of the bosses, and have sought to reject its polarising assumptions. A distinctive local/regional tradition thrived around Norwich in the first half of the fourteenth century, and its patrons and craftsmen were also enmeshed in a network of connections around the shores of the North Sea; these ideas are not contradictory.
At an interpretive level, I have argued for the distinctiveness of this sculptural idiom and sought to disentangle the historiographical issues which have led to its neglect or its derision. It has been interesting to note that formal analyses of fifteenth-century sculpture offered by disapproving or ambivalent twentieth-century commentators often remain apposite, even when I have insisted on removing or reversing their value judgements. Lawrence Stone describes English sculpture between 1410 and 1460 as possessing ‘minute technical virtuosity in stone cutting; rich surface textures [… and] crowded narrative’, finding the 1420s particularly to exhibit an increasing elaboration of surface detail; such characterisation of the period is very fitting for the bosses, though I dispute Stone’s final diagnosis of aesthetic decline.\textsuperscript{664} Instead, I have sought period terms and concepts which might enable a less anachronistic reading of these formal qualities. I have allowed myself to be directed in that enquiry by inevitably modern, phenomenological observations made on site, making explicit a methodology which I believe all art historical enquiry is to some extent already employing. Following the work of Michael Baxandall, Wolfgang Kemp, and John Shearman, I have stressed the importance of speculative investigation into the embodied experience of historical beholders, even when there is a paucity of documentary evidence for a study of an object’s reception.

I have stressed repeatedly the importance of resisting the temptation to reach for anachronistic terms and concepts, drawn from the discourse around linear perspective, when describing a pre-modern representational language. I believe a key contribution of this thesis has been to draw attention to the inadequacy of alternative art-historical concepts for describing spatial representation other than modern systematic (generally perspectival) representation. Because no such concepts exist, discussion of sculptural style in the existing literature is almost always limited to discussion of graphic and linear devices (ways of representing foliage, faces, drapery) and almost never concerned with

\textsuperscript{664} Stone 1955, 195–200.
that particularly sculptural property, of the distribution of forms and space. David Summers’ relatively recent suggestion of concepts of ‘virtuality’ and ‘reality’ in spatial depiction are a step in the right direction, but they tend toward universalism (and therefore a different kind of anachronism), prohibiting the study of period-specific experiences of spatial representation.\(^{665}\) A developed, historicising discourse on this topic would, for example, first have to investigate period concepts of form and space in order to avoid anachronism, but because of the scope of my enquiry I have only been able to outline the current lacunae.\(^{666}\)

Into these lacunae, however, I have tried to offer period-appropriate terms and concepts for this idiom’s distortive spatial mannerisms, exploring general notions of copia, ductus, varietas, epistemological notions of things reale and apparens and the coexistence of contraries, as well as more gravour-targeted terms such as holow and pendaunt, capiens and subtilis. Such offerings are often not falsifiable, but I believe them to be useful in moving towards an authentic description of this baroque, distortive idiom.

Throughout this thesis I have noted the disjunct between that ‘baroque’, ‘distortive’ sensibility evident in the bravura work of the boss carvers on the one hand, and the restrained, orderly preferences of western art historians of the twentieth century on the other. Mary Carruthers has noted that varietas ‘is often at odds with a modern western sensibility that favours ‘pure’ forms and ascetic simplicity’, and this opposition seems key to explaining the historic scholarly neglect of this major sculptural corpus.\(^{667}\) It is possible, however, that a postmodern enthusiasm for the baroque, the complex, the fragmentary and the irregular, now makes these bosses an appealing object for scholarship and encourages the lavishing of undue attention upon them; this is an opposite historiographical problem to Gardener’s modernist dislike of their eccentric forms, but one no less problematic for the objective aspirations of contemporary

\(^{665}\) Summers 2003, 43, 448, 580 and passim.
\(^{666}\) For the beginnings of this discussion see Guest 2012; Lakey 2015.
\(^{667}\) Carruthers 2013, 48.
academic study. It seems inevitable, for example, that current epistemological debates around ‘post-truth’ thinking, pluralism, and radical relativism, have served to make themes of perspective, point-of-view, and negative theology seem pertinent and relevant during my investigation. Not much can be done to prevent the anxieties of the present working themselves out in the study of the past, but by becoming conscious of such anxieties we may help to limit the extent to which we allow them to direct our study of other periods.

Notions of ‘mannerism’ and the ‘baroque’ have emerged continually in this thesis as provocative concepts, and their application to medieval art needs further thought. Both are anachronistic, but they can encapsulate for us a formal disposition toward complexity, curvature and conscious difficulty which does seem to carry weight for the description of some medieval artefacts. Earlier medievalists such as Curtius were happy to use such anachronistic terms to describe medieval style. If such anachronisms are no longer acceptable, we might seek period alternatives, such as those found in the discussion of poets who distinguished between the way of ‘nature’ (to present things as they are) and the way of ‘art’ (to distort and disguise). ‘Artfulness’ might therefore emerge as an authentically medieval concept and a vital term in the discussion of style, contrary to the primitivising attempts by Hans Belting and others to ring-fence ‘art’ as a Renaissance concept.

This thesis also contributes to the emerging scholarly debate around what might supersede ‘materiality’ as the most pressing concern for medieval scholarship. In line with the recent work of Paul Binski and Mary Carruthers, it has focussed not on materials in se but on craft, skill, and cunning; it has foregrounded an interest in the wit

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668 Curtius 2013, 273–82.
669 Vinsauf 2010, line 88-100.
670 The canonical text is Belting 2007.
671 The primary question posed at the 2017 conference ‘New Directions in the Study of Medieval Sculpture’, at the Henry Moore Institute, University of Leeds, was ‘what might come after ‘materiality?’.”
of makers and viewers, with which transforms matter into illusory, ludic, and leading surfaces. The Norwich bosses provide an excellent case study for these emerging concerns primarily because their effect is relational: the experience of viewing them is collaborative, performative, and subjective (in its proper sense). The bosses’ mutually occluding faces endow the viewing subject with an important role, and a sense of their own agency. Mary Carruthers’ study of the concept of *ductus* can serve here to sum up an entire paradigm of object-subject relations: it is ‘that quality within a work’s stylistic patterns which engages an audience and then sets a viewer… in motion within its guiding structures … an experience more like travelling through stages on a route than perceiving a whole object.’\(^{672}\)

In August 2019, whilst this thesis was being completed, Norwich Cathedral took delivery of a 16.7m fairground ‘helter-skelter’ and installed it at the west end of the nave for a fortnight as part of their ‘Seeing It Differently’ initiative.\(^{673}\) Reverend Canon Andy Bryant explained that the structure would help people to get closer to the magnificent nave bosses, amongst the cathedral’s principal glories but hard to appreciate from ground level. Once on the slide, spiralling at speed towards the nave floor, it must be said that one couldn’t see much of the bosses at all. But it would be hard to find a better symbol for the embodied, iterative, playful, circling experience encouraged by the sculptural idiom of these bosses than this great, incongruous installation. More than half a millennium may have passed, but the clergy at Norwich are once more using art and bodily movement within their buildings to prompt discussion, equating physical and epistemological notions of perspective, and asking us to see things differently.

The principal and most basic contribution of this thesis is to our understanding of the Norwich cloister bosses, offering a much-needed art historical investigation of their importance to sit alongside existing archaeological, socio-anthropological,

\(^{672}\) Carruthers 2013, 54.

conservational and architectural analyses of the cloister. Such a monumental and extensive sculptural corpus has long demanded dedicated art historical study. By avoiding a purely monographic approach, however, I have aimed to ensure that this investigation might be useful for future studies of similarly distinctive sculptural artefacts, and might enable or contribute to the revision of some fundamental assumptions in the study of spatial representation in sculpture.


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Questions of sculptural idiom in the later bosses from Norwich Cathedral cloister (c.1411-1430)

Volume II
Illustrations

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This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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167. Boss of a King and a Bishop venerating the cross, before 1506. Stone. Nave, St George’s Chapel, Windsor.


170. Apprentice using drawings and photographs to reproduce boss SK7. Photograph May 2018. Guild of St Stephen and St George, Norwich.


180. ‘Carver at work’ misericord, c.1419, from St Nicholas’ Church, King’s Lynn. Carved oak, 26.5 x 56.5 x 13.5 cm. London: Victoria and Albert Museum. Museum no.W.54-1921.

181. ‘Carver at work’ misericord, c.1419, from St Nicholas’ Church, King’s Lynn. Carved oak, 26.5 x 56.5 x 13.5 cm. London: Victoria and Albert Museum. Museum no.W.54-1921.

182. ‘Carver at work’ misericord, c.1419, from St Nicholas’ Church, King’s Lynn. Carved oak, 26.5 x 56.5 x 13.5 cm. London: Victoria and Albert Museum. Museum no.W.54-1921.
183. ‘Cleric at prayer’ misericord, c.1419, from St Nicholas’ Church, King’s Lynn. Carved oak, 26.5 x 56.5 x 13.5 cm. London: Victoria and Albert Museum. Museum no.W.9-1921.

184. ‘Cleric at prayer’ misericord, c.1419, from St Nicholas’ Church, King’s Lynn. Carved oak, 26.5 x 56.5 x 13.5 cm. London: Victoria and Albert Museum. Museum no.W.9-1921.

185. ‘Cleric at prayer’ misericord, c.1419, from St Nicholas’ Church, King’s Lynn. Carved oak, 26.5 x 56.5 x 13.5 cm. London: Victoria and Albert Museum. Museum no.W.9-1921.


190. ‘Bird with a baby in its nest’, misericord, c.1506. Carved oak. Choir stalls, Manchester Cathedral.


194. ‘Putting the cart before the horse’, misericord, c.1520. Carved oak. Choir stalls, Beverley Minster.

195. ‘Death comes to a rich man’, misericord, c.1478-83. Carved oak. Choir stalls, St George’s Chapel, Windsor.


200. Scupstoel capital, original c.1450, 1870s reconstruction. Avesnes stone. Town Hall, Brussels.

201. Minor corbels, originals c.1450, restored c.1870s. Avesnes stone. Town Hall, Brussels.


203. ‘David leaves triumphant from Jerusalem’ socle, original c.1450, 1870s reconstruction. Avesnes stone. Main façade, Town Hall, Leuven.

204. ‘Battle scene’ socle, original c.1450, 1870s reconstruction. Avesnes stone. Main façade, Town Hall, Leuven.

205. ‘God and his angels’ socle, original c.1441-1460, replacement c.1826-1850. Avesnes stone. Main façade, Town Hall, Leuven. BALaT no.1174077.


208. ‘Aaron makes a sin offering’ socle, original c.1441-1460, replacement c.1826-1850. Avesnes stone. Main façade, Town Hall, Leuven. BALaT no.BL174143.


211. ‘Elijah throws himself upon the child’ socle, original c.1441-1460, replacement c.1826-1850. Avesnes stone. Main façade, Town Hall, Leuven. BALaT no.A116537.


220. Adam Dircksz and workshop, prayer nut with The Crucifixion and The Carrying of the Cross, Northern Netherlands, c.1500-30. Boxwood and metal, diam. 58mm. Toronto, private collection, inv. no. 22707.

221. Adam Dircksz and workshop, medallion (from a polyptych prayer nut) with The Feast of Abasuerus, Northern Netherlands, c.1500-30. Boxwood diam. 46mm. AGO, MMA.


224. Adam Dircksz workshop, Decade Rosary with the Arms of Floris van Egmond and his Wife Margaretha van Glymes, Northern Netherlands, 1500-39. Boxwood, 52.8 x 4.3cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. no. OA 5610.

225. Joes Beyaert, figural boss showing money being delivered, c.1467-1478. Avesnes stone. Registry Room, Leuven Town Hall.


231. Adam Dircksz workshop, Decade Rosary with the Arms of Floris van Egmond and his Wife Margaretha van Glymes, Northern Netherlands, 1500-39. Boxwood, 52.8 x 4.3cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. no. OA 5610.


236. Demonstration of five-point perspective.


Map of Norwich Cathedral cloisters: I

with bays named for identification

The first initial in each bay denotes the walk of which the bay is part (eg. EA is the first bay in the east walk). The second locates it within the walk’s sequence. To identify individual bosses within the thesis text I give the bay initials followed by the number of the boss from catalogue of boss images (eg. EA4 is the central boss of the first bay of the east walk).
For the sake of clarity I have illustrated here the dates at which each of the bays were vaulted in my understanding of the construction sequence, as described in Ch.1&2. It is important to stress that this map concerns only the dates of the vaulting, and not the construction of the cloister’s inner and garthside walls or garthside tracery, which, as described in Ch.1&2, were often completed independent of the vaulting.
Fig. 1: East Walk, Bay A
(North/East corner)

Basic iconographical identification

EAG: Foliate
EA0: A bishop or prior with a monk
EA1: Foliate finial
EA2: Foliate
EA3: Foliate whorl
EA4: Christ descending into hell
EA5: Foliate
EA6: Figure with vines
EA7: Man fighting dragon

Inner wall keystone
West (connects to North Walk)
Basic iconographical identification

EBG: Men fight on horseback
EB0: St Mark
EB1: Man fighting dragon
EB2: Lion and lioness fighting
EB3: Martyrdom of St Edmund
EB4: Resurrection
EB5: Fox, cub, and cock
EB6: Four dragons
EB7: Lion and foliage
Fig. 3: East Walk, Bay C

Basic iconographical identification

ECG: Two musicians
EC0: St Matthew
EC1: Lion and foliage
EC2: Foliate
EC3: Beast and foliage
EC4: Crucifixion
EC5: Foliate
EC6: Green man
EC7: Foliate

Garth-side keystone

Inner wall keystone
Basic iconographical identification

EDG: Boy fighting washerwoman
ED0: St Luke
ED1: Foliate
ED2: Beasts with foliage
ED3: Foliate
ED4: Christ carrying the cross
ED5: Foliate
ED6: Green man
ED7: Beasts with foliage
Basic iconographical identification

EE3: Beast in foliage
EE5: Man fighting beast in foliage
EE4: Christ scourged
EE6: Foliate
EE7: Foliate

Fig. 5: East Walk, Bay E
Basic iconographical identification

EFG: Foliate
EF0: Grotesque gremlin
EF1: Foliate
EF2: Man’s face among foliage
EF3: Man killing dragon
EF4: Foliate whorl
EF5: Acrobat/robed figure
EF6: Foliate
EF7: Foliate

Fig. 6: East Walk, Bay F
Basic iconographical identification

EGG: Foliate
EG0: Foliate
EG1: Foliate
EG2: Foliate
EG3: Foliate
EG4: Foliate
EG5: Foliate
EG6: Foliate
EG7: Foliate

Fig. 7: East Walk, Bay G

Garth-side keystone

Inner wall keystone
Basic iconographical identification
EHG: Foliate
EH0: Foliate
EH1: Foliate
EH2: Foliate
EH3: Foliate
EH4: Foliate
EH5: Foliate
EH6: Foliate
EH7: Foliate

Fig. 8: East Walk, Bay H

Garth-side keystone

Inner wall keystone
Basic iconographical identification

EIG: Foliate
EI0: Foliate
EI1: Foliate
EI2: Foliate
EI3: Foliate
EI4: Foliate
EI5: Foliate
EI6: Foliate
EI7: Foliate

Fig. 9: East Walk, Bay I

Garth-side keystone

Inner wall keystone
Basic iconographical identification

EJG: Foliate
EJ0: Foliate
EJ1: Foliate
EJ2: Foliate
EJ3: Foliate
EJ4: Foliate
EJ5: Foliate
EJ6: Foliate
EJ7: Foliate

Fig. 10: East Walk, Bay J

Garth-side keystone

Inner wall keystone
Basic iconographical identification

EKG: Foliate
EK0: Foliate
EK1: Foliate
EK2: Foliate
EK3: Foliate
EK4: Foliate
EK5: Foliate
EK6: Foliate
EK7: Foliate

Garth-side keystone

Inner wall keystone

Fig. 11: East Walk, Bay K
Basic iconographical identification

ELG: Foliate
EL0: Foliate
EL1: Foliate
EL2: Foliate
EL3: Foliate
EL4: Dragon with foliage
EL5: Foliate
EL6: Foliate
EL7: Foliate with grapes
Fig. 13: East Walk, Bay M

Basic iconographical identification

BMG: Man with hooves
EM0: Two dragons
EM1: Foliate with grapes
EM2: Foliate
EM3: Foliate
EM4: Green man
EM5: Foliate
EM6: Foliate
EM7: Two-headed creature
Basic iconographical identification

ENG: Lion with foliage
EN0: Lion? (Denuded)
EN1: Two-headed creature
EN2: Foliate
EN3: Foliate
EN4: Angel against foliage
EN5: Foliate
EN6: Foliate
EN7: Green man? (Denuded)
Fig. 15: South Walk, Bay A

Garth-side keystone

Inner wall keystone

Basic iconographical identification

SAG: Grotesques
SA0: Man with dog
SA1: Lion with foliage (= ENG)
SA2: St John gives testimony of visions
SA3: Angel with a trumpet
SA4: The Son of Man (Rev.1:12-16)
SA5: Foliate
SA6: John on Patmos (Rev.1:1)
SA7: John’s epistles (Rev.1:1,2)

Fig. 15: South Walk, Bay A
East (connects to East Walk)
Garth-side keystone

Inner wall keystone

Basic iconographical identification

SBG: Two lions in foliate
SB0: Foliage
SB1: John’s epistles (=SA7)
SB2: The voice out of heaven (Rev.4:1)
SB3: Foliage
SB4: Throne of God (Rev.4:2)
SB5: Men with foliage
SB6: Foliage
SB7: Adoration of the Lamb (Rev.5:8-14)

Fig. 16: South Walk, Bay B
Fig. 17: South Walk, Bay C

Basic iconographical identification

SCG: The fall of pride
SC0: Musicians
SC1: Adoration of the Lamb (=SB7)
SC2: Christ in Glory (Rev.5:5)
SC3: Lion’s heads
SC4: Adoration of the Lamb (Rev.5:6)
SC5: Green man
SC6: Foliate whorl
SC7: Adoration of the Lamb (Rev.6:2)
Garth-side keystone

Fig. 18: South Walk, Bay D

Basic iconographical identification

SDG: Two beasts
SD0: Foliate
SD1: Adoration of the Lamb (=SC7)
SD2: First seal (Rev.6:1-2)
SD3: Foliate
SD4: Second seal (Rev.6:4)
SD5: Denuded/missing
SD6: Third seal (Rev.6:5)
SD7: Fourth seal (Rev.6:7-8)
Basic iconographical identification

SEG: Foliate
SE0: Foliate
SE1: Fourth seal (=SD7)
SE2: Fifth seal (=Rev.6:9-11)
SE3: Man
SE4: Sixth seal (Rev.6:12-17)
SE5: Woman
SE6: Man in foliage
SE7: Four angels and winds (Rev.7:1)
Garth-side keystone

Inner wall keystone

Basic iconographical identification

SFG: Decollation of John the Baptist
SF0: Foliate
SF1: Four angels and winds (=SE7)
SF2: Angel with sign (Rev.7:2)
SF3: Foliate
SF4: God in glory (Rev.7:9)
SF5: Foliate
SF6: St John and the elder (Rev.7:13)
SF7: Seventh seal (Rev.7:1-6)
Fig. 21: South Walk, Bay G

Basic iconographical identification

SGG: Lion and beast amid foliage
SG0: Two figures with a scroll?
SG1: Seventh seal (=SF7)
SG2: First trump (Rev.8:7)
SG3: Foliate
SG4: Second trump (Rev.8:9)
SG5: Foliate
SG6: Third trump (Rev.8:10)
SG7: Fourth trump (Rev.8:12-13)
Fig. 22: South Walk, Bay H

Garth-side keystone
Inner wall keystone

Basic iconographical identification

SHG: Annunciation
SH0: Two figures, a chest?
SH1: Fourth trump (=SG7)
SH2: Fifth trump (Rev.8:1-11)
SH3: Foliate
SH4: Sixth trump (Rev.9:13-15)
SH5: Foliate
SH6: Mighty angel (Rev.10:1-3)
SH7: Foliate
Fig. 23: South Walk, Bay I

Garth-side keystone

Inner wall keystone

Basic iconographical identification

SIG: The visitation
SI0: Mounted men wrestling
SI1: Foliate (=SI7)
SI2: Angel gives book to John (Rev.10:5-11)
SI3: Foliate (denuded)
SI4: Army of horsemen (Rev.9:17)
SI5: Foliate
SI6: John measures the temple (Rev.11:1)
SI7: Two witnesses prophesey (Rev.11:3)
Garth-side keystone

Inner wall keystone

Basic iconographical identification

SJG: Foliate
SJ0: Foliate
SJ1: Two witnesses prophesey (=SJ7)
SJ2: Best kills witnesses (Rev.11:8)
SJ3: Three figures
SJ4: Seventh trump (Rev.11:15-16)
SJ5: Mounted men play instruments
SJ6: Woman clothed with sun (Rev.12:1-2)
SJ7: Sign of dragon and woman (Rev.12:3-5)

Fig. 24: South Walk, Bay J
Fig. 25: South Walk, Bay K

Inner wall keystone
Garth-side keystone
Basic iconographical identification
SKG: Foliage with two dragons
SK0: Foxes emerge from holes?
SK1: Dragon and woman (=SJ7)
SK2: Foliate
SK3: Foliate
SK4: War in heaven (Rev.7:7)
SK5: Owl harried by starlings
SK6: Foliage with berries
SK7: Satan cast out (Rev.12:9)
Basic iconographical identification

SLG: Beast from the sea (Rev.8:1)
SL0: Adam and Eve
SL1: Satan cast out (SK7)
SL2: Wild men fight
SL3: Two men fight
SL4: Serpent casting water (Rev.12:15-16)
SL5: Green man
SL6: Windmill [Figs.98-100; Model IX]
SL7: Gates of a city?
**Basic iconographical identification**

**WAQ:** Coronation of the Virgin?
**WA0:** The Trinity
**WA1:** Beast from the sea (=SGL)
**WA2:** Beast like a lamb (Rev.8:13)
**WA3:** Two creatures fight
**WA4:** Adoration of the beast (Rev.13:2–4)
**WA5:** Foliate whorl
**WA6:** Swan with foliage
**WA7:** Vision of the lamb on mount Sion (Rev.14:1)

**Fig. 27: West Walk, Bay A**
Fig. 28: West Walk, Bay B

Basic iconographical identification
WBG: Foliate
WB0: Birds eat berries in foliage
WB1: Vision of the lamb on mount Sion
(=WA7)
WB2: Foliate
WB3: Gryphon standing on man
WB4: Angel announcing judgement
(Rev.14:6,7)
WB5: Fighting cocks
WB6: Foliage
WB7: Angel proclaims fall of Babylon
(Rev.14:8)
Basic iconographical identification

WCG: Grotesque
WC0: Arms of the See and Priory of Norwich
WC1: Angel proclaims the fall of Babylon (=WB7)
WC2: Foliate
WC3: Samson and lion
WC4: The Son of Man and the harvest of the earth (Rev.14:14,15) [Figs.108, 229]
WC5: Trinity with a knight and a lady
WC6: Foliate
WC7: The gathering of grapes (Rev.14:18-20)
Basic iconographical identification

WDG: Foliate
WD0: St Basil presents loaves to Julian
WD1: Gathering of grapes (=WC7)
WD2: Angels with plagues (Rev.15:1)
WD3: Nations adoring (Rev.15:4)
WD4: Canticle of Moses (Rev.15:2)
WD5: Canticle of Moses (Rev.15:3)
WD6: Angels coming from temple (Rev.15:6-8)
WD7: First vial poured on earth (Rev.16:2)
Basic iconographical identification

WEG: Foliate
WE0: St Basil’s vision of the Virgin
WE1: First vial (= WD7)
WE2: Second vial (Rev.16:3)
WE3: Fourth vial (Rev.16:8)
WE4: Third vial (Rev.16:4)
WE5: Third vial (Rev.16:5)
WE6: Third vial (Rev.16:5)
WE7: Fifth vial (Rev.16:12)
Basic iconographical identification

WFG: Foliate
WF0: St Basil and Mercurius
WF1: Fifth vial (=WE7)
WF2: Sixth vial (Rev.16:12)
WF3: Spirits of the devil go forth (Rev.16)
WF4: Spirits from the mouth of the dragon (Rev.16:13)
WF5: Gathering kings to Armageddon
WF6: Seventh vial (Rev.16:17)
WF7: Fall of Babylon (Rev.16:19)
Basic iconographical identification

WGG: Mounted figures (denuded)
WG0: Mercurius overcoming Julian
WG1: Fall of Babylon (=WF7)
WG2: Great hail (Rev.16:21)
WG3: The harlot (Rev.17:16)
WG4: The mother of the harlots (Rev.17)
WG5: Ten horns that are kings (Rev.17)
WG6: Harlot drunk with blood of saints (Rev.17:5)
WG7: Angel tells of woman and beast (Rev.17:7)
Basic iconographical identification

WHG: Man and woman with foliage
WH6: Lamb overcomes kings (Rev.17:14)
WH7: Kings give power to beast (Rev.17:12)
WH1: Woman and beast (=WG7)
WH2: Beast from bottomless pit (Rev.17:8)
WH3: God and ten horns (Rev.17:17)
WH4: Inhabitants of earth wonder (Rev.17:8)
WH5: Inhabitants of earth wonder (cont.)
WH0: Christian of Constantinople (1)
Fig. 35: West Walk, Bay I

Basic iconographical identification

WIG: Foliate

WI0: Christian of Constantinople (2)

WI1: Kings empower beast (=WH7)

WI2: Angel proclaims Babylon's fall

WI3: Mariners lament Babylon's fall (Rev.18:7)

WI4: Babylon (Rev.18:2ff) [Fig.241]

WI5: Merchants lament Babylon's fall (Rev.18:15) [Fig.96]

WI6: Angels cast millstone into sea

WI7: The blood of prophets and saints (Rev.18:24)
### Basic iconographical identification

| WJG: Angel stands on serpent (denuded) |
| WJ0: Christian of Constantinople (3) |
| WJ1: Blood of prophets and saints (=WI7) |
| WJ2: Judgement on the harlot (Rev.19:1-2) |
| WJ3: 'The voice says 'Alleluiah' (Rev.19:3) |
| WJ4: Adoration of four beasts (Rev.19:4) |
| WJ5: 'The voice says 'Alleluiah' (Rev.19:1-2) |
| WJ6: Voice from the throne (Rev.19:5-6) |
| WJ7: Word of God on a white horse (Rev.19:2-16) |

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Fig. 36: West Walk, Bay J

Garth-side keystone

Inner wall keystone
Fig. 37: West Walk, Bay K

Basic iconographical identification

WKG: (Demuded)
WK0: Legend of St Christopher
WK1: Word on a white horse (=WJ7)
WK2: Angel in the sun (Rev.19:17)
WK3: Hosts slain by rider (Rev.19:21)
WK4: Beast and the gathering of the hosts (Rev.19)
WK5: Beast cast into lake of fire (Rev.19:20)
WK6: Satan bound for 1000 years (Rev.20:1)
WK7: Satan loosed (Rev.20:7)
Basic iconographical identification

WLG: Legend of Theophilus? (=NK7)
WL0: Death of Bishop Wakering
WL1: Satan loosed (=WK7)
WL2: New Jerusalem (Rev.21:10 etc.)
WL3: Souls of the blessed (Rev.20:12,13)
WL4: The throne (Rev.20:11,12)
WL5: The lake of fire (Rev.20:14,15)
WL6: Coronation of the Virgin
WL7: Later doorway mouldings
Fig. 39: North Walk, Bay A

Basic iconographical identification

NAG: Two men fight
NA0: Charter granted to the Priory
NA1: Foliate
NA2: Three Maries at the tomb
NA3: Ram in vine eating grapes
NA4: Sealing the tomb
NA5: Women mounted on men fight
NA6: Noli me tangere (1)
NA7: Noli me tangere (2)
Basic iconographical identification

NBG: Owl in a pear tree
NB0: St George and dragon
NB1: Noli me tangere (=NA7)
NB2: Doubting Thomas
NB3: Pelican in her piety
NB4: Supper at Emmaus [see also Figs. 102, 103 and Model V]
NB5: Virgin and unicorn
NB6: Meeting on the road to Emmaus?
NB7: Christ appearing to the apostles (Mark 16:14) [see also Model III]
Fig. 41: North Walk, Bay C

Garth-side keystone

Inner wall keystone

Basic iconographical identification

NCG: Grotesque
NC0: Denuded/missing
NC1: Christ appearing to apostles (=NB7)
NC2: Apostles preaching (Mark 16:15)
NC3: Foliate
NC4: Ascension [Fig.93]
NC5: Foliate
NC6: Apostle with two converts (Mark 16:16)
NC7: Apostles casting out devils (Mark 16:17)
Fig. 42: North Walk, Bay D

Garth-side keystone
Inner wall keystone

Basic iconographical identification

NDG: Foliage with dragons
ND0: Martyrdom of St Peter
ND1: Apostles casting out devils (=NC7)
ND2: Casting out serpents (Mark 16:18)
ND3: Animals and foliage
ND4: Pentecost
ND5: Lion and creature fight
ND6: A poisoned cup (Mark 16:18)
ND7: St John in boiling oil
Fig. 43: North Walk, Bay E

Basic iconographical identification

NE0: Foliate
NE1: Grotesque heads
NE2: St John in boiling oil (=ND7)
NE3: Assumption of St John [see also Figs. 97, 101, and Model IV]
NE4: A miracle of the Virgin?
NE5: Coronation of the Virgin
NE6: Martyrdom of St James [Fig. 95]
NE7: St James the Great before Herod
NE8: Dormition of the Virgin [Fig. 95]
NE9: Martyrdom of St James
Fig. 44: North Walk, Bay F

Garth-side keystone

Basic iconographical identification

NF0: Foliate whorl
NF1: David killing the lion
NF2: Martyrdom of St James (≈NE7)
NF3: Miracle of St Clement
NF4: Miracle of the Virgin
NF5: David and Goliath
NF6: David and Goliath
NF7: Miracle of the Virgin at Mt. St Michel?
Fig. 45: North Walk, Bay G

Basic iconographical identification

NGG: Two women sit
NG0: Birth of St Edward
NG1: Miracle of the Virgin? (=NF7)
NG2: Birth of St Nicholas
NG3: A vision of St Edward at mass
NG4: Herod’s feast [see also Figs. 104-107 and Model X]
NG5: (Denuded)
NG6: Miracle of St Nicholas at sea
NG7: Miracle of St Giles with the hind (1)
Fig. 46: North Walk, Bay H

Garth-side keystone

Inner wall keystone

Basic iconographical identification

NHG: (Demoded)
NH0: Martyrdom of St Edmund
NH1: Miracle of St Giles (1) (=NH7)
NH2: Miracle of St Giles (2)
NH3: Penance of Henry II at the tomb
NH4: Martyrdom of St Thomas (1)
NH5: Martyrdom of St Thomas (2)
NH6: Martyrdom of St Thomas (3)
NH7: Burial of St Thomas [see also Figs. 109, 110 and Model VI]
Fig. 47: North Walk, Bay I

Garth-side keystone

Basic iconographical identification

NI0: Finding St Edmund's head
NI1: Burial of St Thomas (=NH7)
NI2: Legend of St Denis?
NI3: Denuded
NI4: Martyrdom of St Lawrence [Fig.94]
NI5: Edward the Confessor at mass?
NI6: Torments of St Lucy
NI7: Martyrdom of St James the Less? or the fall of Simon Magus?
Fig. 48: North Walk, Bay J

Basic iconographical identification

NJG: Two figures (denuded)
NJ0: Legend of St Denis
NJ1: Martydom/fall? (=NJ7)
NJ2: Legend of St Lucy/St Lawrence/St Vincent?
NJ3: St Catherine before Maximian
NJ4: Martydom of St Stephen
NJ5: St Martin of Tours
NJ6: Conversion of St Paul
NJ7: Martydom of St Catherine
Fig. 49: North Walk, Bay K

Basic iconographical identification

NK0: Foliate
NK1: Miracle of St. Burtace
NK2: Martyrdom of St. Catherine (=NJ7)
NK3: Scene from the legend of Theophilus?
NK4: Flight into Egypt?
NK5: Nativity and Adoration?
NK6: Grotesque
NK7: Scene from the legend of Theophilus?
Figures

Part 1


64. Boss of St Stephen’s martyrdom, c.1300. Stone. South porch, St Stephen’s Church, Norwich.


68. Corbel of a man showing his bottom, c.1325. Stone. St Margret’s Church, Cley.


86. Humorous boss, c.1394. Stone. South porch, Church of St Gregory, Norwich.


98. Detail of boss SL6, c.1411-1420. Caen stone. South/West corner, cloister, Norwich Cathedral.

100. Detail of boss SL6, c.1411-1420. Caen stone. South/West corner, cloister, Norwich Cathedral.


127. Boss of the Nativity, c.1440-1450. Stone, re-dressed. North porch, Church of St Mary’s, Denton.

128. Boss of the Nativity, c.1440-1450. Stone, re-dressed. North porch, Church of St Mary’s, Denton.
129. Boss of the Coronation, c.1440-1450. Stone, re-dressed. North porch, Church of St Mary’s, Denton.

130. Boss of the Ascension, c.1440-1450. Stone, re-dressed. North porch, Church of St Mary’s, Denton.


139. Boss of the Coronation of the Virgin, c.1450. Stone, denuded and damaged by modern light fitting.
North porch, St Mary's Church, Yaxley.

140. Tierceron-star vault with bosses, c.1450. Stone, denuded and damaged by modern light fittings.
North porch, St Mary's Church, Yaxley.
141. Boss of the Ascension, c.1450-1460. Stone with modern polychromy. St Helen’s Church, Great Hospital of St Giles, Norwich.

142. Boss of the Resurrection, c.1450-1460. Stone with modern polychromy. St Helen’s Church, Great Hospital of St Giles, Norwich.
143. Boss of the Nativity, c.1450-1460. Stone with modern polychromy. St Helen’s Church, Great Hospital of St Giles, Norwich.

144. Boss of the Nativity, c.1450-1460. Stone with modern polychromy. St Helen’s Church, Great Hospital of St Giles, Norwich.
145. Boss of the Coronation of the Virgin, c.1450-1460. Stone with modern polychromy. St Helen's Church, Great Hospital of St Giles, Norwich.

146. Boss of the Annunciation, c.1450-1460. Stone with modern polychromy. St Helen's Church, Great Hospital of St Giles, Norwich.
147. Tierceron-star vault with liernes, c.1450-1460. Stone with modern polychromy. St Helen’s Church, Great Hospital of St Giles, Norwich.


156. Boss of Christ healing Peter’s mother-in-law, after 1509. Stone with modern polychromy (?). South transept, Norwich Cathedral.

Part 2


161. *Scupstoel* capital, original c.1450, reconstruction c.1870s. Avesnes stone. Town Hall, Brussels.
162. Demonstration of the conical form produced by manipulation of Fig.1. Photographs: author.


165. Apprentice using drawings and photographs to reproduce boss SK7. Photograph May 2018. Guild of St Stephen and St George, Norwich.
166. Heraldic boss, c.1506. Stone. Choir, St George’s Chapel, Windsor.

167. Boss of a King and a Bishop venerating the cross, before 1506. Stone. Nave, St George’s Chapel, Windsor.

170. Apprentice using drawings and photographs to reproduce boss SK7. Photograph May 2018. Guild of St Stephen and St George, Norwich.


180. ‘Carver at work’ misericord, c.1419, from St Nicholas’ Church, King’s Lynn. Carved oak, 26.5 x 56.5 x 13.5 cm. London: Victoria and Albert Museum. Museum no.W.54-1921.

181. ‘Carver at work’ misericord, c.1419, from St Nicholas’ Church, King’s Lynn. Carved oak, 26.5 x 56.5 x 13.5 cm. London: Victoria and Albert Museum. Museum no.W.54-1921.
182. ‘Carver at work’ misericord, c.1419, from St Nicholas’ Church, King’s Lynn. Carved oak, 26.5 x 56.5 x 13.5 cm. London: Victoria and Albert Museum. Museum no.W.54-1921.

183. ‘Cleric at prayer’ misericord, c.1419, from St Nicholas’ Church, King’s Lynn. Carved oak, 26.5 x 56.5 x 13.5 cm. London: Victoria and Albert Museum. Museum no.W.9-1921.
184. ‘Cleric at prayer’ misericord, c.1419, from St Nicholas’ Church, King’s Lynn. Carved oak, 26.5 x 56.5 x 13.5 cm. London: Victoria and Albert Museum. Museum no.W.9-1921.

185. ‘Cleric at prayer’ misericord, c.1419, from St Nicholas’ Church, King’s Lynn. Carved oak, 26.5 x 56.5 x 13.5 cm. London: Victoria and Albert Museum. Museum no.W.9-1921.


190. ‘Bird with a baby in its nest’, misericord, c.1506. Carved oak. Choir stalls, Manchester Cathedral.


194. ‘Putting the cart before the horse’, misericord, c.1520. Carved oak. Choir stalls, Beverley Minster.

195. ‘Death comes to a rich man’, misericord, c.1478-83. Carved oak. Choir stalls, St George’s Chapel, Windsor.


200. Scupstoel capital, original c.1450, 1870s reconstruction. Avesnes stone. Town Hall, Brussels.

201. Minor corbels, originals c.1450, restored c.1870s. Avesnes stone. Town Hall, Brussels.

203. ‘David leaves triumphant from Jerusalem’ socle, original c.1450, 1870s reconstruction. Avesnes stone. Main façade, Town Hall, Leuven.
204. ‘Battle scene’ socle, original c.1450, 1870s reconstruction. Avesnes stone. Main façade, Town Hall, Leuven.

205. ‘God and his angels’ socle, original c.1441-1460, replacement c.1826-1850. Avesnes stone. Main façade, Town Hall, Leuven. BAlaT no.1174077.

208. ‘Aaron makes a sin offering’ socle, original c.1441-1460, replacement c.1826-1850. Avesnes stone. Main façade, Town Hall, Leuven. BALaT no.BL174143.


221. Adam Dircksz and workshop, medallion (from a polyptych prayer nut) with *The Feast of Ahasuerus*, Northern Netherlands, c.1500-30. Boxwood diam. 46mm. AGO, MMA.

224. Adam Dircksz workshop, *Decade Rosary with the Arms of Floris van Egmond and his Wife Margaretha van Glymes*, Northern Netherlands, 1500-39. Boxwood, 52.8 x 4.3cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. no. OA 5610.

225. Joes Beyaert, figural boss showing money being delivered, c.1467-1478. Avesnes stone. Registry Room, Leuven Town Hall.


231. Adam Dircksz workshop, *Decade Rosary with the Arms of Floris van Egmond and his Wife Margaretha van Glymes*, Northern Netherlands, 1500-39. Boxwood, 52.8 x 4.3cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. no. OA 5610.


236. Demonstration of five-point perspective.


246. Detail from f.10r of Mariano Taccola, De ingeniis, c.1427. Ink on vellum. Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence.
