

[Recepción del artículo: 16/06/2019]
[Aceptación del artículo revisado: 27/07/2019]

**AESTHETIC ATTITUDES IN GOTHIC ART:
THOUGHTS ON GIRONA CATHEDRAL**
**ACTITUDES ESTÉTICAS EN EL ARTE GÓTICO:
PENSAMIENTOS SOBRE LA CATEDRAL DE GERONA**

PAUL BINSKI
Cambridge University
pb214@cam.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to explore aspects of medieval aesthetic experience and criticism of architecture by means of the documented Catalan and Latin expertise held at Girona Cathedral in 1416-17. Medieval documentation of this type is relatively rare. Having outlined the cases made by the architects summoned to give their opinions on the development of the cathedral, the discussion considers three particular junctures. The first is that of illumination and affect, particularly *jucunditas* and *laetitia*; the second is that of nobility and magnificence; and the third is the juncture of the palace and church. I suggest that there is significant common ground between secular and religious buildings in regard to aesthetic experience and verbal articulation. Arguing against comprehensive aesthetic and theological orders of thought and experience, and in favour of the occasional character of medieval experience (that is, the sense in which experience should be understood within a particular set of circumstances, appropriately), I conclude that much of the known language of this sort sits ill with Romantic and post-Romantic concepts of the Sublime.

KEYWORDS: Girona cathedral, Gothic, expertise, affects, nobility, magnificence, Sublime

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este trabajo es explorar aspectos de la experiencia estética medieval y la crítica de la arquitectura a través de las visuras redactadas en catalán y en latín, que tuvieron lugar en la Catedral de Girona en 1416-1417. La documentación medieval de este tipo es relativamente rara. Una vez esbozados los casos presentados por los arquitectos convocados para opinar sobre el desarrollo de la catedral, la discusión se centró en tres coyunturas particulares: la primera fue la de la iluminación y la emoción, particularmente la *jucunditas* y la *laetitia*; la segunda

fue la de la nobleza y la magnificencia; y la tercera fue la confluencia del palacio y la iglesia. Sugiero que existe una base común significativa entre los edificios seculares y religiosos con respecto a la experiencia estética y la expresión verbal. Argumentando en contra de los órdenes de pensamiento estéticos y teológicos y de la experiencia, y a favor del carácter ocasional de la experiencia medieval, concluyo que gran parte del lenguaje conocido de este tipo reposa sobre los conceptos románticos y post-románticos de lo sublime.

PALABRAS CLAVE: catedral de Girona, gótico, pericia, influencia, nobleza, magnificencia, sublime

My point of departure is the justly celebrated paper by Meyer Schapiro published in 1947 “On the aesthetic attitude in Romanesque art”.¹ Schapiro’s study is a critique of the idea that “medieval art was strictly religious and symbolical, submitted to collective aims, and wholly free from the aestheticism and individualism of our age”.² To substantiate this, Schapiro did what we still have to do to pursue this line of enquiry, namely trawl through the admirable printed collections of sources. Here I want to continue this enquiry in the light of the guiding assumption that thought is integral to the experience of architecture: that there is some intellectual understanding or conception of the object. But what is our object actually? It is not the buildings in regard to their formal minutiae. The object is the experience of them, the discourse concerning them. Experience is inherently a matter of interpretation, convention and public discourse. Some empiricists dislike this kind of attention: for them language is formulaic, and belief in it naive. Others will argue that experience is entirely subjective. I differ: conventions are chosen for a reason; they inform and articulate self-conscious subjectivity; and not everything can be dismissed as “commonplace”. The utterances of historical agents and the histories and usages of words matter.

Here, then, I want to consider the role language, including “experience” language, plays in articulating and legitimating technical and aesthetic decision-making, even if at the level of what might be called “general effect”. The richness of such discourse is apparent in particular in epithetic language and hypallage, the transferral of epithets: we speak of people being noble, joyful or bright, but also of buildings or artefacts as having the same qualities or, more accurately (since sensations are not within objects but subjects), provoking those experiences. In metaphor lies evidence for the richness of thought, and for the transfer of social and religious discourse to things. And it is especially within the context of the so-called “expertise”, or jury of expert architects summoned to give their opinions on the problems posed by a particular building project, that we can occasionally find evidence for this discourse.

My focus in this respect is a *unicum* in European Gothic architecture, the great nave of Girona cathedral (ill. 1), which is one of the key monuments of Catalan and Balearic architecture. The formalist Jean Bony, so influenced by late 19th-century aesthetic theory, referred in

¹ M. SCHAPIRO, “On the Aesthetic Attitude in Romanesque art”, in M. SCHAPIRO, *Romanesque Art: Selected Papers*, London, 1977, pp. 1-27. I am most grateful to the two anonymous reviewers of this paper for helpful suggestions which are incorporated here to the best of my ability, with thanks.

² SCHAPIRO, “Aesthetic Attitude”, p. 1.

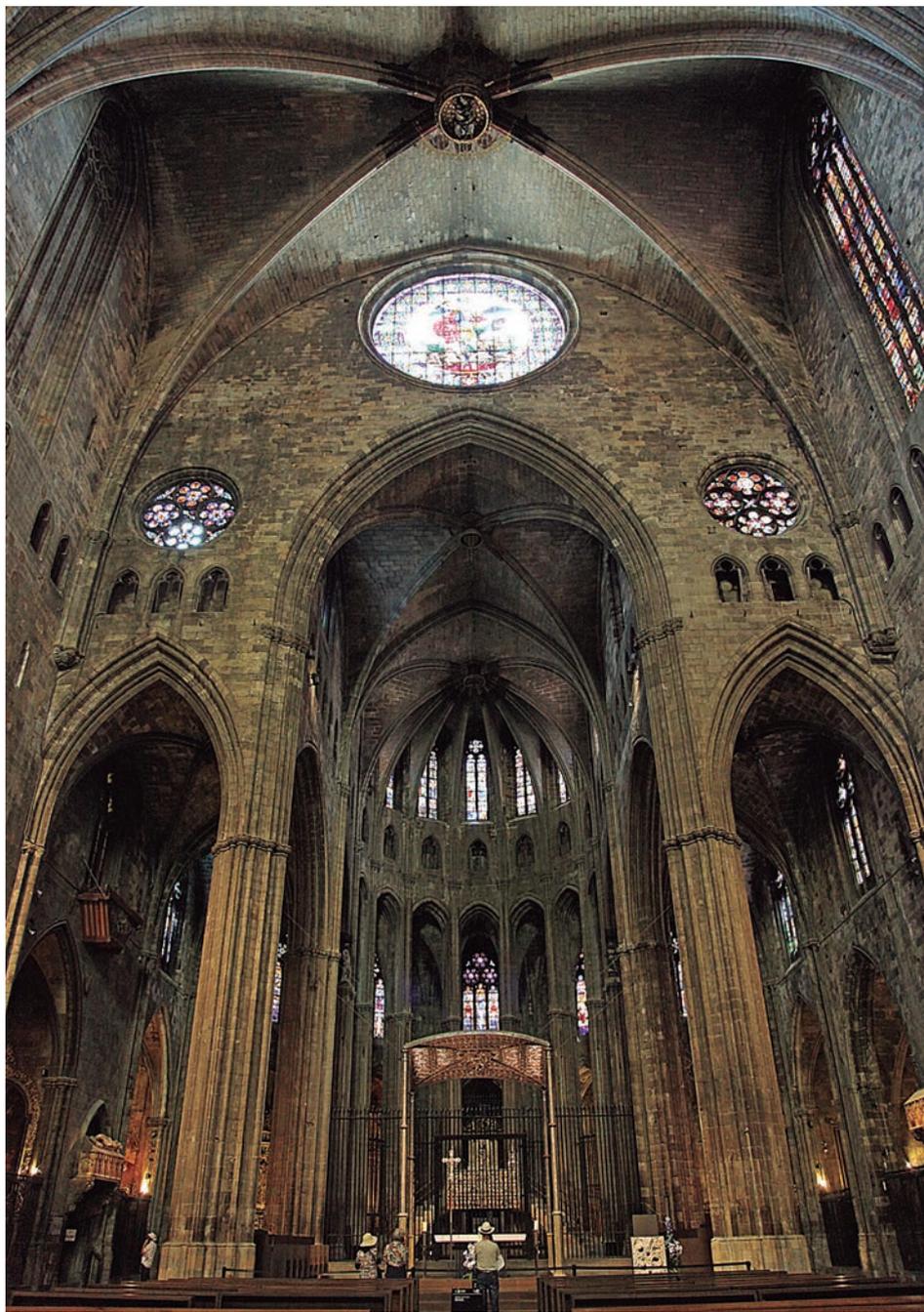


Fig. 1. Girona Cathedral interior (photo Paul Binski)

his work on medieval architecture to the southern feeling for space, as opposed to the northern sense of line.³ Of the southern feeling for space, Girona is a paradigm. Begun in the 14th century at the east end with a standard, three-nave section somewhat on the model of Barcelona cathedral, it was completed between the 15th and 17th centuries with one vast, four-bay nave spanning about 23m, the widest single span stone vault in Europe, and a monument to courage, if not wealth.⁴

The present remarkable effect is that of a giant barn-like void fronting what is in effect the cross-section of the presbytery and its aisles, an outcome like, though probably not validated by, some earlier French Cistercian churches (e.g. Syvanès (Aveyron) or Mendicant churches (S. Croce in Florence or S. Lorenzo in Naples)).⁵ Girona as completed reflects the standing of Catalan and Balearic Gothic of which the technically most breathtaking is the cathedral at Palma (ill. 2) in Majorca, which in its vast tense austerity may especially have goaded the authorities at Girona on the mainland.⁶

In itself Girona is magnificent; but its value for my enquiry lies in the survival of an unusually explicit collection of well-known documents for the so-called “expertise” of 1416-17, summoned precisely in order to address the question whether the cathedral should be continued in standard three-nave format, or with a single nave. The hearings of this expertise, conducted before the bishop and canons in desultory fashion, recorded in Catalan but with Latin summaries and verdict, preserve the opinions of eleven mostly Aragonese architects as well as the cathedrals master of the works Guillelmus Boffiy together with the formal summary for the bishop, Dalmau de Mur i de Cervelló (1376-1456), and his chapter.⁷ Dalmau de Mur was a patron of the arts.⁸

³ J. BONY, *The English Decorated Style: Gothic Architecture Transformed, 1250–1350*, Oxford, 1979, pp. 32, 62; Id., *French Gothic Architecture of the 12th and 13th Centuries*, Berkeley and London, 1983, pp. 445-463.

⁴ For a recent collection of studies see E. RABASA DÍAZ, A. LÓPEZ MOZO, M. A. ALONSO RODRÍGUEZ (eds.), *Obra Congrua: estudios sobre la construcción gótica peninsular y europea*, Madrid, 2017. English-language studies include G. E. STREET, *Some Account of Gothic Architecture in Spain*, London, 1865, pp. 318-329 and pp. 501-513; C. WILSON, *The Gothic Cathedral: The Architecture of the Great Church, 1130–1530*, London, 1990, p. 283; see also M. OLIVER, *La catedral de Gerona*. León, 1973; for the expertise see the commentary in P. LAVEDAN, *L'Architecture gothique religieuse en Catalogne, Valence et Baléares*, Paris, 1935, pp. 198-208; also C. FREIGANG, “Die Expertisen zum Kathedralbau in Girona (1386 und 1416/17) – Anmerkungen zur mittelalterlichen Debatte um Architektur”, in C. FREIGANG (ed.), Cr. M. STIGLMAYR (col.), *Gotische Architektur in Spanien*, Frankfurt am Main and Madrid, 1999, pp. 203-226 and C. FREIGANG, “*Solemnus, notabilis et proporcionabilis*. Les expertises de la construction de la cathédrale de Gérone. Réflexions sur le discours architectural au Moyen Âge”, in F. JOUBERT and D. SANDRON (eds.), *Pierre, Lumière, couleur. Études d'histoire de l'art du Moyen Âge en l'honneur d'Anne Prache*, Paris, 1999, pp. 385-393.

⁵ For the former, LAVEDAN, *L'architecture Gothique*, pp. 44-45, fig. 16; WILSON, *Gothic Cathedral*, p. 283.

⁶ J. DOMENGE I MESQUIDA, “La catedral de Mallorca: reflexiones sobre la concepción y cronología de sus naves”, in FREIGANG, *Gotische Architektur*, pp. 159-187; exceptionally wide interior spaces in the region include that of Santa María del Pino, in Barcelona.

⁷ I regret that I have not had the option to collate the printed editions with the original source. I have depended upon J. VILLANUEVA, *Viage literario a las iglesias de España*, vol. 12, Madrid, 1850, pp. 324-338 which gives the Catalan, and STREET, *Gothic Architecture in Spain*, pp. 501-513. I retain the Latin spellings of first names.

⁸ R. S. JANKE, “The Retable of Don Dalmau de Mur y Cervelló from the Archbishop's Palace at Saragossa: A Documented Work by Francí Gomar and Thomás Giner”, *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, 18 (1983), pp. 65–83; see also

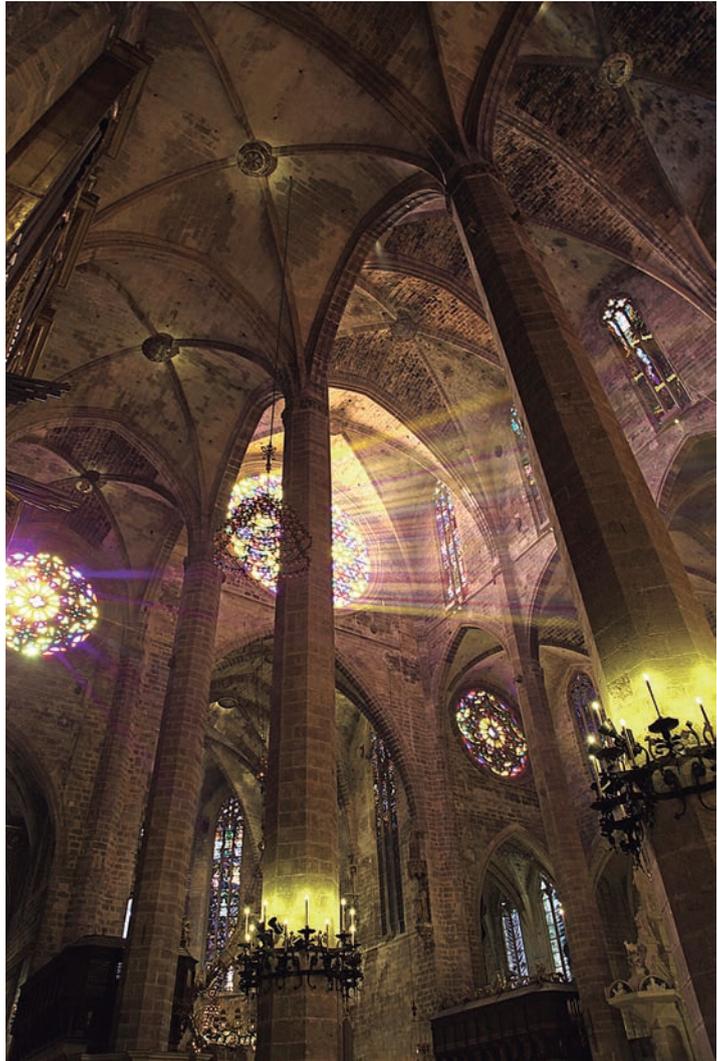


Fig. 2. Palma Cathedral interior (photo Paul Binski)

As we know, such expertises were not uncommon, and a famous one had been held a few years earlier at Milan, with which the Girona records have something in common, though the problems faced were different: there is a good body of literature on these professional architectural juries and their verdicts, and the literature on Girona's focuses especially on the

M. C. LACARRA DUCAY, "Un gran mecenas en Aragón: D. Dalmacio de Mur y Cervellón (1431–1456)", *Seminario de Arte Aragonés*, 33 (1981), pp. 149–159; EAD., "Mecenazgo de los obispos catalanes en las diócesis aragonesas durante la Baja Edad Media", *Aragonia sacra*, 2 (1987), pp. 19–34.

professional and technical aspect of the proceedings.⁹ In his valuable study of the expertise, Christian Freigang considers some of the language, particularly that to do with order, congruence, proportion, compatibility, conformity, deformity and pulchritude, which, he says, “is fundamentally comparable to the terminology applied by medieval theology of reflection on beauty”; this judgement is supported by reference to De Bruyne.¹⁰ I maintain that we can squeeze the Girona evidence for slightly more in pursuit of aesthetic and experience language itself, because there are other words and affinities to consider. To have accounts in both Latin and vernacular forms helps us to access the critical currency used by the architects themselves in weighing up and debating the issues.

As regards occasion, I shall be brief, but the Girona expertise opened on 23 January 1416 with the issue of “one nave or three” and how to go on from there.¹¹ Having formally established the worthiness of God’s church built *ex politis lapidibus*, its Latin proemium states *nonnulli enim asserebant opus dictae fabricae sub navi una debere congruentius consumari, affirmantes illud fore nobilius, quam si sub tribus navibus opus hujusmodi subsequatur*. Practical issues such as the risk of earthquake, lightening strike and wind pressure were to be balanced by aesthetic ones, such as what was *pus competibile e mes proporcionable*. Between January 1416 and March 1417 there followed twelve sworn vernacular depositions, some architects swearing on their *scientia e consciencia* –firm knowledge and honestly-held opinion as it were: elsewhere I have commented on the use of the term *scientia* by architects.¹²

A majority of the experts favoured the three-nave solution. Paschasius de Xulbe (Tortosa), citing Vitruvian *firmitas* (though not mentioning Vitruvius) said that that solution *e bona e ben ferma*; Johannes his son agreed saying the work would be more beautiful, better and strong as well as more adept (“... *pus bella e millor e pus fort obra... seria pus bella e pus proffitosa*”). Bartolomeus Gual (Barcelona) favoured three but said the nave should be raised to provide for an O (i.e. rose window) of 14 palms which would make the work beautiful and notable (*bella e notable*).

Antonius Canet (Barcelona and Urgell) on the contrary said that three naves would not be as noble as one (*mas no tant honorable com la primera de una nau*). Any loss of the middle or triforium stage in the single nave solution would be balanced by a round window in the east wall – better to lose the triforium than light (*...mas encare val mes perdre lo andador* (i.e. triforium) *que la claror*). The alternative would be very gloomy (“*molt forcha*”). A single nave would be cheaper and brighter (“*molt meny messio de un terc... sens comparacio seria molt pus clara*”). Some disputed whether one or three naves would be more congruent and better

⁹ As well as FREIGANG, “Die Expertisen”, pp. 203-26 see for a recent survey see J. DOMENGE i MESQUIDA, J. VIDAL FRANQUET (eds.), *Visurar l’arquitectura gòtica: Inspeccions, consells i reunions de mestres d’obra (s. XIV-XVIII)*, Palermo, 2018.

¹⁰ FREIGANG, “Die Expertisen”, p. 222.

¹¹ From this point onwards I refer to VILLANUEVA, *Viage literario*, pp. 324-38 and STREET, *Gothic Architecture in Spain*, pp. 501-513.

¹² For *scientia* in scholastic discourse, and also in regard to Milan and the expression *ars sine scientia nihil est* see P. BINSKI, “‘Working by words alone’: the architect, scholasticism and rhetoric in thirteenth-century France”, in M. CARRUTHERS (ed.), *Rhetoric Beyond Words: Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, 2010, pp. 14-51, at pp. 34, 40.

proportioned, or greatly deformed (*pus competibile e pus proporcionable*” or “*gran difformitat*). Johannes de Guingamps (Narbonne) held that one nave would be more rational, brilliant, better proportioned and cheaper (*sera pus rohonable e pus resplendent e de millor raho e de menyys messio*). In fact there should be three roses, *tres rosas* (note the alternate use of “rose” to “O”) which would give a grand light to the church and endow it with great perfection and nobility (*e donarie gran resplendor... e retrien la obre ab gran perfectio e molt honorable*).

In March 1417 the final voting split 7-4 in favour of three naves, but finally the cathedral’s own master Guillermus Boffiy strongly backed one nave, as having great windows and brilliance, beauty and notability (*haura grans finestratges e gran claror qui sera fort bella cosa e notable*) – as well as being cheaper.

The vote was now 7-5, and yet a final adjudication was given in favour of one nave. The Latin text of the chapter adjudication stated that the single nave would be, so to speak, more solemn, notable and proportionate and more cheerful and joyful in virtue of its shining brightness: ... *solemnius, notabilius et proporcionabilius capiti dictae Ecclesiae jam incepto quam sit opus trium navium supradictum. Tum quia etiam multo maiori claritate fulgebit quod est laetius et jocundum*. Because money was short it would also be *multo minori praetio quam opus trium navium et in breviori tempore poterit consumari*, i.e. cheaper and quicker to put up. How sobering it is for aestheticians, and yet how true to life, that the “smoking gun” should be cost not beauty. The nave was then built according more or less to the prescriptions of Canet, Guingamps and Boffiy, though its build was not in fact quick at all.

More might be said about the development of the arguments and the positions struck by the architects. On balance the winning party perhaps used less technical language about proportion, conformity, and more language about great effects, and cost. It would be tempting, but misleading, to see the slightly more heightened aesthetic words of the triumphant single-nave party as a persuasive vehicle, architects “working by words alone”, in the cumulative winning-over of a courtroom. The proceedings were too dilatory for this to have been feasible. On the other hand those favouring the single-nave solution were all locals, and Boffiy may already have pressed his case with the chapter independently.¹³

In regard to the recorded language, we find (1) a series of Catalan words relating to illumination or its lack, and sensation: *claror, resplendor, fulgor, foscha* together with the Latin connection of *fulgor* and *claritas* to *laetitia* and *jucunditas*. Then (2) words concerning status and proficiency: the Latin *nobilis*, the Catalan *honorable, notable, proffitosa*; finally (3) more general sub-Vitruvian language concerning proportion or general form (*proporcio*), stability and beauty or deformity, as noted.

This language helps us to set our agenda for this brief study of medieval aesthetic language, for which Girona’s expertise serves as a ‘pretext’. Because Christian Freigang has commented on such notions as *proporcio*, I want particularly to concentrate on the first two groups just mentioned, for two reasons: first, they have passed relatively without comment; second, they raise issues about the relationship between ‘theological’ and ‘socio-aesthetic’ language that exposes an important dynamic in the way medieval experience of artefacts – not just buildings – was framed.

¹³ LAVEDAN, *L’architecture Gothique*, pp. 201-202.

It is the shared dynamic of this language that Schapiro, I suggest, tends to overlook; but it is also the case that some of the language is not solely theological at all.

CLARITAS-LAETITIA-JUCUNDITAS

I noted a moment ago that the chapter adjudication was that the single-nave solution would be more solemn (*solemnus*), notable and proportionate and more cheerful and joyful in virtue of its shining brightness. *Solemnitas* should be taken here as a term of decorum meaning “fitting the solemnity of the liturgy”. I want particularly to focus on the passage *Tum quia etiam multo maiori claritate fulgebit quod est laetius et jocundum*. While *solemnitas* is a term at the “cool” end of the humoural spectrum, *jucunditas* is “warm”.¹⁴ The term *jucunditas* (generally taken to mean agreeableness, pleasantness, delight) is a quality with wide purchase. Classically it denotes both forms of pleasure and social bearing, friendship, and occurs quite commonly with *laetitia* (happiness). This and related terms derive from the longstanding Roman and Christian discourse of ethics, monastic virtue and *curialitas* or courtliness. From the early Middle Ages onwards, as C. Stephen Jaeger argues, *laetitia*, *iucunditas*, *hilaritas* and *amicitia* “constitute an ideal court atmosphere”; a bright and cheerful countenance “spreading jocundity and happiness” to all members of a royal palace was an external aspect of a virtuous courtly disposition.¹⁵ By their (communal) nature, such virtues were true both of aristocratic and monastic society. Within the Christian dispensation *jucunditas* and *laetitia* were monastic and spiritual qualities, as is apparent from the notion of *gaudium* as an “inner” joy, a *jucunditas spiritualis* and hence as a form of intellectual emotion in which delight in particular facilitates thought and learning.¹⁶ *Jucunditas* is a ‘bridging’ term common to theological and social thought. The interesting thing is that it seems to be used relatively seldom of artefacts or the experiences induced by them in observers; so when it is used in this way, we take note.

In the Girona account as set down, no obvious theological outcome is developed from such terms. On the face of it *jucunditas* and *laetitia* follow directly from the equally warm idea of the much brighter effulgence afforded by larger windows; the association is not with the width or form of the vault or windows, but the mode of illumination of this part of the church. Whether or not Girona as realised with a single nave and large oculi is truly a bright building is debatable: the unusual main elevation of the nave limited the penetration of light from the nave’s deep lateral chapels, so the nave is to a significant extent lit only from the clearstory stage. Its light levels appear to be higher than those in the choir, and this suggests that the relative illumination of different parts of the building was at issue.

The wider role, actual or presumed, of light in medieval aesthetics and theology hardly needs consideration here: no account of the intended or actual appearance of a medieval

¹⁴ For this range of aesthetic experience see M. CARRUTHERS, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages*, Oxford, 2013, p. 31.

¹⁵ C. S. JAEGER, *The Origins of Courtliness. Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courty Ideals 939-1210*, Philadelphia 1985, pp. 127-175, especially p. 170.

¹⁶ CARRUTHERS, *Experience of Beauty*, pp. 123-24 draws attention to Psalm 132, *Ecce quam bonum et quam iucundum habitare fratres in unum*; for the spiritual aspect of intellectual joy see G. SPINOSA, “Plaisir de la connaissance comme émotion intellectuelle chez Hugues de Saint-Victor”, *Quaestio*, 15 (2015) pp. 373-382.

church in this period ever argued that it was too brilliantly lit.¹⁷ On the contrary, by the 13th century at the latest gloom was deemed pastorally, and probably sacramentally, inappropriate but brilliance appropriate not least as a means of renovation actual and figurative (instances at Auxerre and St Albans).¹⁸ So much is certainly suggested by complaints about dark chancels in contemporary visitation records.¹⁹ Against this we need to set the (possibly apophatic or “inner” and specialised) darkness and saturation of colour in northern French church glazing of the period between Abbot Suger and the mid 13th century, and the setting-aside of that aesthetic thereafter.²⁰ In around 1080 in his *Liber confortatorius* Goscelin of Saint-Bertin had written the importance to him of buildings being magnificent, tall (*precelsa*), filled with light (*perlucida*) and beautiful throughout (*perpulchra*).²¹ By the time of the Milan expertise three centuries later, Vitruvian firmness and illumination both mattered.²²

A connection of *jucunditas*, *laetitia* and light terms is nevertheless observable especially amongst early authorities, including those writing spiritually: Augustine refers to the *jucunditas lucis aeternae*, Boethius to *claritas atque jucunditas*, Cassiodorus to *jucunditas puri luminis et vitae*.²³ In the *Didascalicon* Hugh of St-Victor asks “*Quid jucundius ad videndum coelo cum serenum est, quod splendet quasi sapphirus?*”²⁴ In Abbot Suger’s *De Administratione* we recall the altar panels which shone with the radiance of delightful allegories, “*quod allegoriarum jocundarum jubare resplendet*”.²⁵ In their accounts of the qualities of the colour green

¹⁷ A vast literature; see for example G. BINDING, *Die Bedeutung von Licht und Farbe für den mittelalterlichen Kirchenbau*, Stuttgart, 2003; E. SPINAZZÈ, *La luce nell’architettura sacra: spazio e orientazione nelle chiese del x-xii secolo tra Romandie e Toscana*, Frankfurt am Main, 2016; E. PANOFKY (ed. and trans.), *Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St Denis and its Art Treasures*, 2nd edition, Princeton, 1979; E. de BRUYNE, *Études d’esthétique médiévale*, 3 vols. Bruges, 1946, at vol. 2, p. 83; O. VON SIMSON, *The Gothic Cathedral. The origins of Gothic architecture and the medieval concept of order*, New York, 1956, pp. 50-58. One fictitious passage which suggests that the excessive light from windows could be injurious is found in verses 354-372 of Albrecht’s *Titirel*, discussed below.

¹⁸ V. MORTET (ed.), *Recueil de textes relatifs à l’histoire de l’architecture et à la condition des architectes en France au moyen âge (xix-xiii siècles)*, 2 vols., Paris, 1911-29, vol. 1, p. 101 (Auxerre 1183-1206): *...ut ecclesia quo more veterum usque tunc fuerat subobscura in lucem claresceret amplioem*; also H. T. RILEY (ed.) *Gesta abbatum monasterii Sancti Albani: a Thoma Walsingham, regnante Ricardo Secundo, ejusdem ecclesiae præcentore, compilata*, vol. 1, Rolls Series 28, London, 1867, p. 281 and p. 285 (St Albans) *omnia congrua lumine illustrarentur, ita ut videretur in magna parte ecclesiae renovari*; compare *lux continua*, PANOFKY, *Abbot Suger*, pp. 100-101. For the liturgical background D. R. DENDY, *The Use of Lights in Christian Worship*, London, 1959, is still useful.

¹⁹ See P. BINSKI, “The 13th-century English altarpiece”, in M. L. MALMANGER et al (eds.), *Norwegian Medieval Altar Frontals and Related Materials*. Acta, Institutum Romanum Norvegiae, vol. 11, Rome, 1995, pp. 47-57, at p. 51.

²⁰ For two related accounts of church illumination in this period see J. GAGE, “Gothic Glass: Two Aspects of a Dionysian Aesthetic”, *Art History*, 5/1 (1982), pp. 36-58, and M. LILlich, *Studies in Medieval Stained Glass and Monasticism*, London, 2001, pp. 302-354. These should be read together with L. GRODECKI, “Le vitrail et l’architecture au Xlle et au Xllle siècles”, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 6 (36), pp. 5-24, for a different perspective

²¹ M. OTTER (trans.), *Goscelin of St Bertin, The Book of Encouragement and Consolation*, Woodbridge, 2004, pp. 115-16.

²² J. S. ACKERMAN, “*Ars Sine Scientia Nihil Est*. Gothic theory of architecture at the cathedral of Milan”, *Art Bulletin*, 31/2 (1949), pp. 84-111 at p. 108, col. 1: *deliberaverunt quod ipsa ecclesia debet et habet pluere pro majori fortitudine et claritate in tribus tectis et non in duobus*.

²³ AUGUSTINE, *De Libero Arbitrio*: 3:25, MIGNE (ed.), *PL* 32, 1309; BOETHIUS, *De consolazione philosophiae*, 3:11, MIGNE (ed.), *PL* 63, 0771B; CASSIODORUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 19, MIGNE (ed.), *PL* 69, 0920A.

²⁴ HUGH OF ST-VICTOR, *Didascalicon*, 7:12, MIGNE (ed.), *PL* 176, 821A.

²⁵ PANOFKY, *Abbot Suger*, pp. 62-63.

as a liturgical colour in church, late-medieval English pontificals describe it as “*viduus est... et visu jocundus atque confortaturus*”, as lively, of delightful aspect and strengthening.²⁶

Later chronicle Latin does much the same. In 1307 the *Annales Paulini* of St Paul’s cathedral in London noted that on the occasion of Cardinal Peter of Spain’s celebration of masses for the soul of Eleanor of Castile at Westminster Abbey, large numbers of candles were lit around the tomb and sanctuary, and also held by the participants in such quantity that the “splendour of lights, shining like a starry sky, gladdened (*exhilaravit*) with great joy (*iocunditas*) the hearts of those beholding it” (...*unde fulgor radiantium luminarium quasi caelum stellatum animos inspicientium iocunditate pervalida exhilaravit*).²⁷ As regards *laetitia*, Isidore in his *Etymologies* (VII.xii.29) states that lights are kindled and carried not in order to put darkness to flight, since at the same time there is daylight, but in order to display a symbol of joy (*Tunc enim accenduntur luminaria ab eis, et deportantur, non ad effugandas tenebras, dum sol eodem tempore rutilet, sed ad signum laetitiae demonstrandum*).

In the light of the expertise’s discourse, it is useful to note that similar terminology penetrated the professional language of stained glass making in the same period as Girona’s expertise. The earliest specialist treatise on glass painting, by Antonio da Pisa, composed c. 1400, says “And commit this to memory: in all your work always combine one third of it with white glass because the white makes your work joyful (*allegro*) and legible (*comparascente*)” (*E ancora abbi questo ad memmoria: in tucti le tuoi lavori che tu fai, mictili sempre dentro la terça parte de vetro biancho perochè el biancho sì te fa lo tuo lavoro allegro e comparescente*) the term *allegro* coming from the Latin *alacer* (lively, happy, cheerful).²⁸

Dante, unsurprisingly, is wonderful on this elective affinity of light, joy and liveliness. In a famous passage in *Purgatorio* (canto XI, 79-84) the manuscript sheets illuminated by Franco the Bolognese outshine, literally “out-smile” (*più ridon*) those by Oderisi of Gubbio:

‘Oh!’, diss’ io lui, ‘non se’ tu Oderisi,
l’onor d’Aggobbio e l’onor di quell’arte
ch’alluminar chiamata è in Parisi?
‘Frate’, diss’ elli, “più ridon le carte
che pennelleggia Franco Bolognese;
l’onore è tutto or suo, e mio in parte.

Purgatorio canto I, 19-21 captures the laughing quality of the mixed light of dawn:

Lo bel pianeta che d’amar conforta
faceva tutto rider l’oriente,
velando i Pesci ch’erano in sua scorta.

What, asks Dante in the *Convivio* (III, cap. VIII, 11) when writing about the soul, is laughter but a flashing-out (*corruscazione*) of the soul’s delight (*dilettazione*), a light appearing

²⁶ W. H. ST. JOHN HOPE and E. G. C. F. ATCHLEY, *English Liturgical Colours*, London 1918, pp. 229-230.

²⁷ O. LEHMANN-BROCKHAUS, *Lateinische Schriftquellen zur Kunst in England, Wales und Schottland vom Jahre 901 bis zum Jahre 1307*, 5 vols., Munich, 1955-1960, no. 2987.

²⁸ S. PEZZELLA (ed.), *Il Trattato di Antonio da Pisa sulla fabbricazione delle vetrate artistiche*, Perugia, 1976, p. 25. Noted J. GAGE, *Colour and Culture. Practice and meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction*, London, 1993, p. 69.

outwardly just as within: *E che è ridere se non una corruscazione de la dilettazone de l'anima, cioè uno lume apparente di fuori secondo sta dentro?*

Further instances are provided by De Bruyne.²⁹ John Gage in his bravura discussion of this language in his study of colour, noted the association of “riant” with “cler” and the transposition of the idea of a smile “lighting up a face” in the context of Apocalypse illustration.³⁰ The English Douce Apocalypse, made at the end of the reign of Henry III (d. 1272), has numerous examples of the lighting up by smiles of angelic faces, at p. 32 the angel in question being that “whose face was the sun”, Rev. 10. And so we still speak of a smile “lighting up” a face. Much earlier, in 1240, and in the wake of court contacts with Reims cathedral, Henry had ordered the making of cherubim for a Crucifixion: *duos scherumbinos cum hyllari vultu et jocoso*.³¹ His chancery clerks were not being terribly precise about the relation of *jocosus* (often associated with joking, humour), *hilaritas* (a human virtue, for the most part) and *jucunditas*, linked to delight or agreeableness. Given the patronage involved, it is difficult not to associate this facial eloquence with the notion of an outwardly courtly countenance and bearing noted earlier, and equally difficult to sever it from the prefaces to the Mass including *Vere dignum*, where hosts of angels and blessed seraphim join together in celebrating their joy (*exultatione*) in the *Sanctus* itself.

More obvious ambivalences are commonly encountered in aesthetically complex and interesting terminology. We recall the continuity of *jocus* with *jocalia*, jewels. Similar points relating light, colour, delight and laughter or smiling might be made about the verb *gaudere* (to delight in), providing by turn the Middle English *gaud*, hence *gaudy*, and Old French *gaudir*; *gaudens* is occasionally synonymous with *ludens*, so it is not surprising that gauds are also beads, tricks, showy deceits, illusions.³²

One type of text that did not figure in the surveys by Mortet and others was German vernacular poetry, so by way of anticipating the next stages in my argument I wish briefly to mention one of the outstanding fictional accounts of a spectacularly gaudy building, the Grail Temple in Albrecht von Scharfenberg's *Jüngerer Titurel*, the epic of Titurel and the knights of the Holy Grail composed around or after 1270.³³ Titurel's Grail Temple, essentially a descriptive reverie deploying the piling-up of effects typical of poetic amplification, is written in an *ornatus difficilis* style in keeping with its spectacularly eclectic aesthetic, neither fully Gothic

²⁹ DE BRUYNE, *Études d'esthétique médiévale*, vol. 2, pp. 12-16.

³⁰ GAGE, *Colour and Culture*, pp. 77-78.

³¹ Discussed in P. BINSKI, *Becket's Crown: Art and Imagination in Gothic England 1170-1300*, New Haven and London, 2004, pp. 236-237.

³² CARRUTHERS, *Experience of Beauty*, p. 21 n 9. The lexicon and rhetoric of beauty and delight has long been the subject of interest, most comprehensively in the recent work of Mary Carruthers; for a lexical approach see also M.-M. GAUTHIER, “*Pulcher et Formosus*, l'appréciation du Beau en Latin Médiévale”, in Y. LEFÈVRE et al (eds.), *La lexicographie du Latin Médiévale et ses rapports avec les recherches actuelles sur la Civilisation du Moyen-Age*, Actes du Colloque international, no. 589, Editions du CNRS, Paris, 1981, pp. 401-419; see also DE BRUYNE, *Études d'esthétique médiévale*, vol. 2, pp. 79-80.

³³ For what follows see W. WOLF (ed.), *Albrechts Von Scharfenberg Jüngerer Titurel*, I. *Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters*, vol. 45, Berlin, 1955, pp. 83-110; See also R. BARBER and C. EDWARDS, “The Grail Temple in Der Jüngerer Titurel” in *Arthurian Literature*, 20 (2003), pp. 85-102.

nor fully Byzantine.³⁴ It is not an account of scale. Prominent in the vocabulary of the Temple's description are variety – notably of precious stones and their various eucrastic (health-bringing) properties – and also *Wunder, Kunst, Freude* (wonder, art, joy), *Richeit* (splendor) and *Edeln* (nobility). Wonder is occasioned by variety and by art, *Kunst*, especially that of the higher form, *hoher* or *meisterlicher Kunst* (vv. 345, 365). So is heartfelt joy and delight (*an vrouden ungeselwet wer min herz* (v. 342); *so vil gap vreuden Luste* (v. 407)). Even the wondrous artificial foliage in the Temple is said to consist of “high and noble” plants (vv. 399-405, at 401). Good cheer, splendour, loftiness of thought and nobility are clearly connected, since the nobleman is best able to understand a display of magnificence which might make lesser men cower (vv. 329-330, 341). Indeed, flying and laughing angels are depicted which themselves occasion laughter (*in vrouden fluge und also lachebaere* (v. 344)). This must be an acknowledgement of the contemporary French and German fashion, reflected also at Westminster, for depicting joyous smiling angels smiling, as in the case of the *lachelgel* at Bamberg cathedral, the huge guardian angels in the buttress tabernacles on the exterior of Reims and the gaudy angels over the choir triforium at Lincoln.³⁵ Similar angels are located high around the east end of the royal chapel of the cathedral at Palma. In almost all these cases, note, the angels are markedly elevated in their positions, looking out or down. *Jucunditas* is a by-product of height or uplift since it can also be an attribute of an entire landscape seen katascopically (i.e. as if from above) from a vantage point.³⁶

These associations entitle us to see in the vernacular text the same kind of discursive chains that connect such terms as *elegans, insigne, nobile, and praeclarum*.³⁷ In *Titurel* wonder and delight have explicit causes which we can find more generally in medieval aesthetic writing, and to consider these more closely we move for a moment to *nobilitas* and *magnificentia*.

NOBILITAS

I noted earlier that the first postulate of the Girona expertise was whether the single nave would be “more noble” than the triple nave: *affirmantes illud fore nobilius, quam si sub tribus navibus opus hujusmodi subsequatur*. The subsequent Catalan depositions by Canet, Guingamps and Boffiy use the cognate terms *honorabile* and *notable*. In Girona's case *honorabile* and *notable* may indicate relative status, decorum: Girona was to express its regional diocesan standing in comparison, for example, with the two major Catalan churches, the cathedral and Santa Maria del Mar in Barcelona, and also Palma. One implicit reason for stressing this

³⁴ BARBER and EDWARDS, “Grail Temple”, p. 101; for the aesthetic see also L.-I. RINGBOM, *Graltempel und Paradies: Beziehungen zwischen Iran und Europa im Mittelalter*, Stockholm, 1951.

³⁵ I have discussed this phenomenon in P. BINSKI, “The Angel Choir at Lincoln and the Poetics of the Gothic Smile”, *Art History*, 20 no. 3 (1997), pp. 350-374 and BINSKI, *Becket's Crown*, pp. 233-259.

³⁶ E. P. GOLDSCHMIDT, “Le voyage de Hieronimus Monetarius à travers la France: 17 Septembre 1494-14 avril 1495”, *Humanisme et Renaissance*, 6/1 (1939), pp. 55-75, at p. 72, where a view from the tower of St Sernin in Toulouse *ex pulcritudine aspectus et situs loci iocundum prebebat spectaculum*. My thanks to Professor Julian Luxford for this reference.

³⁷ GAUTHIER, “*Pulcher et Formosus*”, p. 405.

may have been the relatively rare occurrence of single-nave solutions in cathedrals of the region (e.g. Albi) as opposed to parish and mendicant churches of the sort alluded to earlier.

The term *nobilis* in the sense either of “well-known” or “noble” had been used, though at a disputed date, of the cathedral of Narbonne (ill. 3) raised “in imitation of the noble (*nobiles*) and magnificently worked churches which are being erected in the kingdom of France”.³⁸ *Imitatio* was an important motive in all ethics and high patronage, and the notion of buildings brightening an entire landscape was explored in a famously encomiastic sentiment by Joinville in his biography of St Louis when discussing the church building of Louis IX as something which “illuminated” (*enlumina*) the kingdom.³⁹

As an object of imitation *nobilitas*, as suggested by Tituleur, is connected to *elegans*, *insigne* and *praeclarum*. Louis IX’s noble buildings were a sign of magnificence as a form of action.⁴⁰ But they also evinced virtue. In Aristotle’s *Ethics* (IV, 2, 1122a 23) magnificence itself is a virtue, consisting of fitting or “ad-propriate” expenditure without regard to gain. Cicero (*De Inventione* II. liv.163) connects *magnificentia*, loftiness of mind, to the contemplation and execution of great and lofty (*magnarum et excelsarum*) things with a grandeur and magnificence of imagination. These terms, influenced by the Thomist link between magnificence and fortitude or courage, occur in the Dominican pastoral *Somme le Roi*, in which “magnanimity consists in loftiness, grandeur, and nobility of courage”.⁴¹ It follows that an interest in such virtues will transfer simultaneously to great actions, *res gestae* and to their outcomes in magnificent building.⁴²

Nobility, then, is an aspect of enlarged thinking leading to magnification. An association of nobility with height is therefore unsurprising, little remarked-upon as it is. To Aristotle (*Politics* IV.11.1295b3-10; *Ethics* VII.13.1153b17-19), physical height is an accident of fortune, an external good. In regard to our elective affinities, we also note that the Late Middle English sense of the word “tall” includes prompt, active, handsome, elegant, fine, valiant (etc.): it connects to verbs and adjectives of the sort being discussed here. “Low” conveys a position in a social or moral hierarchy quite as much as the “high and mighty” sovereign. That such metaphor included nobility or royalty is witnessed by that astute observer Matthew Paris of St Albans (d. 1259). In excoriating the rapid decline of the mendicant orders from their early admirable poverty, Matthew in 1243 referred to the fact that their dwellings now “surged up to royal heights” (*quarum aedificia jam in regales surgunt altitudines*), a raising of lofty walls, *celsis muralibus*, fulfilling the prophecy of Hildgard of Bingen.⁴³ That Matthew used this simile in less polemical

³⁸ C. FREIGANG, “Jean Deschamps et le Midi”, *Bulletin Monumental*, 149 (1991), pp. 265–298, at 267: *et in faciendo imitare ecclesias nobiles et magnifice operatas et opera ecclesiarum que in regno francie construuntur*.

³⁹ C. FREIGANG, “*Imitatio* in Gothic architecture: forms versus procedures”, in Z. OPAČIĆ and A. TIMMERMANN (eds.), *Architecture, Liturgy and Identity: Liber amicorum Paul Crossley*, Turnhout, 2011, pp. 297–313. For Joinville, see N. DE WAILLY (ed.), *Histoire de Saint Louis*, Paris, 1868, p. 267.

⁴⁰ C. S. JAEGER (ed.), *Magnificence and the Sublime in Medieval Aesthetics. Art, Architecture, Literature, Music*, New York, 2010, pp. 2-3.

⁴¹ A. MURRAY, *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages*, Oxford, 1978, pp. 360-361 (cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa IIae q. 134 art. 1-4).

⁴² See P. BINSKI, “Reflections of the ‘Wonderful Height and Size’ of Gothic Great Churches and the Medieval Sublime”, in JAEGER, *Magnificence and the Sublime*, pp. 129-156, especially pp. 131-132.

⁴³ H. R. LUARD, (ed.), *Chronica Majora*, Rolls Series 57, vol. 4 (London, 1877), pp. 279-280.



Fig. 3.
Narbonne
Cathedral
(photo Paul
Binski)

contexts is shown by his observation that the abbatial buildings of St Albans Abbey included “a most noble hall which is called *Palatium Regium* because it has two stories (*quia duplex est*)”.⁴⁴ In the Anglo-French verse recension of his life of St Edward the Confessor, Matthew states that while being built, Westminster Abbey had risen *grantz e reaus*, grand and royal.⁴⁵

THE CHURCH AND/AS PALACE: *TRISTITIA*, *LAETITIA*

In pursuit of my socio-aesthetic quarry I want now to examine the nexus of church and palace or, better, church as palace, via the concept of *magnificentia*. I say church as palace because I want to question a religious-secular division which Meyer Schapiro, suspicious of clerical authority, subscribed to in his work on sculpture. Schapiro saw the “liturgical” church as lacking the aesthetic freedom of externality, of the marginal. Logically, but I think questionably, he stated “The effect of architectural beauty upon feeling... is more commonly noted in descriptions of refectories, chapter-houses, and the private chambers of bishops and abbots”; hence there was a sphere of artistic creativity “without religious content and imbued with values of spontaneity, individual fantasy” “delight” and “expression” “that anticipate modern art”.⁴⁶

I do not consider Schapiro’s dyad of constraint and freedom particularly helpful. It seems to me to be a romanticism, stemming from post-medieval notions of the aesthetic freedom of the artist on the one hand, and the anaesthetic properties of the authoritarian centre on the other. For one thing, secular spaces such as palaces offered occasions for the rehearsal of the formal (i.e. not spontaneous or fantastic) idea of magnificence. In Esther 1:7 the expression *magnificentia regia* is associated with the courtly largesse of King Assuerus, but we find this or related terms such as *magnificentia regalis* much more widely and especially in relation to palaces, as for example the Palace of Westminster and the palaces of the Angevin kings in France 1187.⁴⁷ *Magnificentia regalis* forms part of a group with words indicating a ruler’s dignity: *sublimitas*, *maiestas*, *eminentia*, *excellencia*, *munificentia*, *magnitudo* and so on.

The discourse of magnificence presupposed a material and visual culture common to the palace and church. Roman poets such as Virgil, Statius, Ovid and Sidonius lauded the mighty marble columns of palaces fictional or real, and I have suggested elsewhere that this ekphrastic tradition influenced understanding of the particularly English tendency to adorn palaces such as that built by Henry of Blois at Wolvesey, and also great churches such as Canterbury cathedral (ill. 4) and Lincoln cathedral, with shiny marble columns and other fittings.⁴⁸ The bishop’s

⁴⁴ RILEY, *Gesta abbatum* I, p. 314; BINSKI, *Becket’s Crown*, pp. 50-51.

⁴⁵ H. R. LUIARD (ed.), *Lives of Edward the Confessor*, Rolls Series 3, London, 1858, p. 90 and line 2301.

⁴⁶ SCHAPIRO, “Aesthetic Attitude”, p. 15 and p. 1 respectively.

⁴⁷ JAEGER, *Magnificence and the Sublime*, p. 2; for Palace of Westminster see M. ESPOSITO (ed.), *Itinerarium Symonis Semeonis ab Hybernia ad Terram Sanctam*, Dublin, 1960, pp. 26–27, describing the *famosissimum palatium regum Anglorum, in quo est illa vulgata camera, in cujus parietibus sunt omnes historie bellice totius Bible inefabiliter depicte... in non modica intuentium admiratione et maxima regali magnificentia*. See also M. J. J. BRIAL et al, *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France*, vol. 19, Paris, 1833, p. 241: *Perhibet et testimonium illustris filius Regis Angliae, et cancellarius ejusdem, qui perpetuae Virgini regio schemate construxit aulam, in cujus munificentia fulget magnificentia regalis*.

⁴⁸ For the use of such sources by Gervase of Canterbury, Giraldus Cambrensis and Henry of Avranches in the ekphrasis of marble, see BINSKI, *Becket’s Crown*, pp. 3-12, 55-57; for Wolvesey, G. ZARNECKI, “Henry of Blois as a Patron of

or archbishop's hall, as at Canterbury, was the home of largesse, but so was the bishop's own church. Church and *aula* were coterminous in some Latin traditions.⁴⁹

Matthew Paris refers to the "most noble presbytery" (*presbiterio nobilissimo*) built with marble magnificence by the bishop of Ely Cathedral at the same time as he constructed other *aedificia magna et nobilia* in readiness for his entry into the *palatia celestia*.⁵⁰ The chapter-house of Westminster Abbey built in the same period, the mid 13th century, had a later inscription referring to worship within it as within a "beautiful hall", *aula Formosa*.⁵¹ Marble adornment was a feature of English and north-eastern French and Flemish architecture. Schapiro himself cites the instance of St Trond near Liège in 1169, the abbey church of which surpassed "the most magnificent palaces by its varied workmanship" (*operosa varietate*) which explicitly included coloured and polished stones.⁵²

Schapiro drew attention to the history of the bishops of Le Mans in the 1150s in which bishop William constructed a private chamber, finely illuminated by windows shining with bright light (*claro lumine*), of which "the workmanship surpassed the materials"; next to it was a chapel with wall paintings which held enrapt the eyes and minds of the spectators to such an extent that in their delight (*dilectio*) they forgot their own business (*occupatio*).⁵³ This passage about freedom from worldly care stemming from delight deserves note. We encounter a version of it in the account of the great church in chapter 9 of the famous pilgrim's guide to Compostella: "in this church you will find no crack or defect. It is marvellously wrought. Large, spacious, bright, fitting in scale, well-proportioned in breadth, length and height, it is considered a wonderful and ineffable work which is even built in two storeys, like a royal palace. Whoever walks through the upper galleries, if sad when he ascended, becomes happy and joyful at the sight of the exceeding beauty of the temple." (*In eadem vero aecclesia nulla scissura, vel corruptio invenitur; mirabiliter operatur, magna, spaciosa, clara, magnitudine condecenti latitudine longitudine et amplitudine congruenti, miro et ineffibili opere habetur, que etiam dupliciter velut regale palacium operatur. Qui enim sursum per naves palacii vadit, si tristis ascendit, visa optima pulcritudine eiusdem templi letus et gavisus efficitur*).⁵⁴

Sculpture" in S. MACREADY and F. H. THOMPSON (eds.), *Art and Patronage in the English Romanesque*, Society of Antiquaries Occasional Papers, new series 8, London, 1986, pp. 158-172, p. 168.

⁴⁹ R. E. LATHAM, D. R. HOWLETT, and R. K. ASHDOWNE (eds.), *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, Oxford, 1975-2013, vol. I under "aula" 2a.

⁵⁰ H. R. LJIARD, (ed.), *Chronica Majora*, Rolls Series 57, vol. 5 (London, 1880), pp. 454-455; for these elisions see P. BINSKI, *Gothic Wonder. Art, Artifice and the Decorated Style 1290-1350*, New Haven and London, 2014, pp. 155-159.

⁵¹ BINSKI, *Gothic Wonder*, 156.

⁵² SCHAPIRO, "Aesthetic Attitude", p. 5, see MORTET, *Receuil*, vol. 2, p. 12.

⁵³ SCHAPIRO, "Aesthetic Attitude", p. 13 after MORTET, *Receuil*, vol. 1, pp. 165-66.

⁵⁴ SCHAPIRO, "Aesthetic Attitude", p. 15; see P. L. GERSON, A. SHAVER-CRANDELL, A. STONES, and J. KROCHALIS (eds.), *The Pilgrim's Guide: a critical edition*, 2 vols., London, 1998, vol. 2, pp. 68-71 and see the notes in vol. 2, p. 201, n. 46 "for this famous passage". In DE BRUYNE, *Études d'esthétique médiévale*, vol. 2, p. 91 the whole passage is cited without extensive comment. See also E. DEUBER-PAULI, D. GAMBONI, "Suger, Théophile, Le Guide du Pèlerin. Éléments de théorie de l'art au xiii^e siècle", *Études de lettres. Revue de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Lausanne*, Ser. 4, vol. 3, no. 2 (1980), pp. 43-91 especially at pp. 50-54, 59-60, 72-76; the authors refer, in the spirit of De Bruyne, to Schapiro's "Aesthetic Attitude" as promoting an individualistic or autonomous aesthetic which they regard as "subordinate" to religion (p. 80); see CARRUTHERS, *Experience of Beauty*, p. 8 for this issue.



Fig. 4. Canterbury Cathedral, Trinity Chapel, marble columns (photo Paul Binski)

We note the allusion to two stories being reminiscent of a royal palace found also in Matthew Paris. I would add that the opening statement about the structure's lack of flaws might be a spiritual allusion to virginal integrity; nor is it unlike an Arabic text on divine perfection inscribed at the Alhambra.⁵⁵ However, my main interest in this account of a great church as palace is in the affective narrative of its beholders. The spectator may enter in a state of *tristitia* but leaves with *laetitia*, having rejoiced (*gavisus*). We have already observed an association between *laetitia* and *fulgor*. That *laetitia* follows immediately from the recitation in the pilgrim's guide of the church's scale and proportions reminds us that Isidore (*Etymologies*, I. XXVII.13) also connects *laetitia* to *latitudo* or wideness, because *tristitia* is a "constriction". The shift from sadness to joy is found in a sermon *Veneranda dies* local to Compostella: *Si tristis accedit quis, letus recedit*.⁵⁶ A version of this is referred to in connection with the construction of a beautiful hall at St Germain d'Auxerre.⁵⁷ In particular it may be traced in Cassiodorus's commentary on Psalm 89, concerning prayer: *Quod mavult petit, supra quam meretur acquirit; tristis ad eam venit, sed laetus abscedit*.⁵⁸

The path from *tristitia* to *laetitia* is, I am sure, a commonplace and, as Cassiodorus witnesses, is not at all disconnected from religious devotion. Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* (line 1983) after all, speaks of "Joye after wo, and wo after gladnesse". It may well be part of the emotional narrative, the fulfilment, of pilgrimage itself. Clearly these narratives are neither explicitly nor exclusively theological in form, or for that matter "secular". My reading of the Le Mans and Compostella sources returns me at the end of this section to chapter 33 of Abbot Suger's *De Administratione* in which Suger, echoing Ps. 25:8 and taking delight in the abundant beauty of God's house, is called away *anagogico more* from external cares (*curis exintrinsicis*)⁵⁹. Suger is writing of *ars sacra*, but the affective narrative, from an experience of delight in variety or abundance to the setting aside of worldly business, is essentially the same as that set out in the account of the chamber of William, Bishop of Le Mans noted earlier in which *dilectio* triumphs over *occupatio*, though it is admittedly more skilful and theologically purposive.⁶⁰ Both texts deploy the Ovidian commonplace *Ars superabat materiam*. The affective gap, if any, between palace and church is not as large as some have maintained.

⁵⁵ See J. M. PUERTA VILCHEZ, "Speaking architecture: poetry and aesthetics in the Alhambra palace", in M. GHARIPOUR, I. C. SCHICK (eds.), *Calligraphy and Architecture in the Muslim World*, Edinburgh 2013, pp. 29-45, at p. 26 for the inscription on the dome of the Hall of Comares.

⁵⁶ GERSON, et al, *Pilgrim's Guide*, vol. 2, p. 201 n 46; see V. CORRIGAN, "Music and the Pilgrimage" in M. DUNN and L. K. DAVIDSON (eds.), *The Pilgrimage to Compostela in the Middle Ages*, London and New York, 2000, pp. 43-68, at pp. 61-62.

⁵⁷ MORTET, *Receuil*, vol. 2, p. 76 (1252-78) *quia vero aedificiorum jucunda amoenitas hominis corpora sustentat et recreat, corda laetificat et confortat...* A related instance is the inscription around the tabernacle of Lazarus at Autun, MORTET, *Receuil*, vol. 2, p. 123.

⁵⁸ MIGNE (ed.), *PL* 70, 0643D; for the rhetorical dimension, see A. W. ASTELL, "Cassiodorus's Commentary on the Psalms as an *Ars rhetorica*", *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric*, 17/1 (1999), pp. 37-75.

⁵⁹ PANOFSKY, *Abbot Suger*, pp. 62-64.

⁶⁰ CARRUTHERS, *Experience of Beauty*, pp. 39-41 for further observations on this famous passage.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

I conclude from this discussion, first, that the epithetic language of building (as deployed by clerks and architects) was an aspect of a larger socio-aesthetic complex of images and ideas, a *habitus*. What was desirable in society was transferrable to architecture, which should also have nobility, brilliance, good cheer and agreeableness. The transferred epithet works in two directions. Architecture may embody the social virtue of magnificence, but it also instils magnificence in us, is itself an enlarging agent in terms of mood and personal ethic. The language of socio-aesthetic grandeur is that of the high mimetic mode, a human thing worthy of admiration, the imitation of that which is superior to us, but within our reach as a humanly graspable accomplishment.⁶¹ We can deduce that great palaces and cathedrals were the products of great patrons. The epithetic social and ethical language is perhaps an aspect of the wider practice of “seeing in” buildings human types (the column as prophet or apostle, or angels as buttresses for instance) demonstrated by the longstanding tradition of architectural exegesis, as well as a symptom of a deeper tendency to see in built or other human artefacts something like a physiognomy.⁶²

Given the place such qualities and virtues had within both aristocratic and monastic communities it is not surprising, secondly, to find the palace and church sharing the same discourse. This runs against the split implicit in Schapiro’s study. Magnificence, that “making great” which directed experience from sadness to joy, knew no secular-religious divide. In asking about experience it is not necessary to displace religious or metaphysical meaning or purpose. The aesthetic, the social and the ethical overlapped with and articulated theology.⁶³ It remains striking to those expecting a theological dimension to architectural deliberation that at Girona the opportunity to defend the three-nave solution, or indeed the (successful) proposal to introduce triple rose windows, was not cast in terms of an appeal to the Trinity. Theological imagery or justification is absent in the records of what was a practical and validating exercise for a cathedral chapter that is unlikely not to have included theologians. An emphasis sometimes found on the classic intellectualist quantities of beauty set out within the noble Platonic, Pythagorean and Augustinian tradition of significant number and proportion, does not of itself yield an account of the *experience* of those properties.⁶⁴ Number and geometry may well be fundamental to the *idea* of architecture but not to its aesthetic, properly understood as those sensations experienced and comprehended by the senses and understood socially.⁶⁵ Hence, as suggested by Freigang, the difficulty of defining the meaning of that keyword at Girona (and elsewhere), “proportion”.⁶⁶

⁶¹ For the “high mimetic mode” I cite N. FRYE, *Anatomy of Criticism. Four Essays*, Princeton, 1990, pp. 33-34.

⁶² BINSKI, *Becket’s Crown*, pp. 3-12, 54-62; for a wider study see C. WHITEHEAD, *Castles of the Mind: A Study of Medieval Architectural Allegory*, Cardiff, 2003. For the more general issue of “seeing in” and physiognomy (following the work of Wittgenstein and Wollheim), see E. H. GOMBRICH, *The Sense of Order. A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art*, London 1984, pp. 214-215.

⁶³ See the essays in J. F. HAMBURGER and A-M. BOUCHÉ (eds.), *The Mind’s Eye. Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*, Princeton, 2006, notably the remarks at pp. 11-31, in response to Baxandall (p. 21).

⁶⁴ See the useful discussion of this in R. SCRUTON, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, London 1979, pp. 58-70; for the “noble” tradition of geometry and meaning (but not experience) see N. HISCOCK, *The Wise Master Builder. Platonic Geometry in Plans of Medieval Abbeys and Cathedrals*, Aldershot, 2000.

⁶⁵ For this paradox see CARRUTHERS, *Experience of Beauty*, pp. 195-196.

⁶⁶ FREIGANG, “*Solemnus, notabilis*”, pp. 391-393.

It is worth noting, thirdly, that the language of the Girona expertise is primarily that of criticism and legitimation of broad aesthetic decisions relating to mood, character, general effect as well as practical virtues of sort in the Vitruvian tradition. As Freigang notes, many of the discussions at Girona bring to mind Vitruvius's prerequisites for architecture, *firmitas*, *utilitas* and *venustas*, as well as his six principles of *ordinatio*, *dispositio*, *eurythmia*, *symmetria*, *decor* and *distributio*.⁶⁷ After all *distributio*, economy provided the master mason with his "smoking gun". What the language does not permit is architectural criticism based on the conventional history of architectural style. The values under discussion enjoyed a currency of greater duration and stability than those of specific architectural idioms as understood by Modernity, including Romanesque and Gothic. In this sense the discourse of experience transcends the usual discourse of architectural criticism. "Experience" language, whether theological or social, is not technical language.

Finally, mood itself: the language of Girona differs significantly from the Romantic view of the Gothic cathedral as a sublime thing in the face of which, as Coleridge said, "I am nothing".⁶⁸ Coleridge's sense of Gothic gloom owed something to the shift in values apparent in Thomas More's "dimme and doubtful light" and Milton's image (*Il Penseroso*, vv. 159-60) of "storied windows richly dight/Casting a dim religious light".⁶⁹ Perhaps John Gage's anti-Panofskian emphasis on negative theology, divine darkness, at Saint-Denis marked a return to this idea, given that Gage emphasized a subsequent shift to brilliance, to the carbuncle away from the sapphire, in the 13th century, and perhaps underestimated the cheer of 12th-century glazing in France.⁷⁰ In the evidence for medieval architectural experience I have as yet found little actual basis for Edgar de Bruyne's statement that "La grandeur semble donner aux médiévaux le frisson du sublime".⁷¹ When, in his history of the Franks, Gregory of Tours says of the church of Namatius in Clermont-Ferrand that in it "one is conscious of the fear of God (*terror Dei*) and of a great brightness" the object of the emotion is not the building at all, but God.⁷²

The language of light and agreeableness is not the Romantic currency of awe or fear, of the cowering diminished subject. On the contrary: many sources point to the possibility of a brighter, enlarging and also more straightforward experience of the architectural interior whether Gothic, or pre-Gothic. Of these, the Girona expertise's *laetitia*, *jucunditas* and *nobilitas* stand as testimony. We create great buildings; and we are very often enlarged by them. But we are not crushed or belittled. In this sense the Romantic insight, powerful as it is, stands somewhat to one side of a much more "positive" Western tradition of architectural aesthetics.

⁶⁷ For the circulation of Vitruvius in the Middle Ages see C. H. KRINSKY, "Seventy-Eight Vitruvius Manuscripts", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 30 (1967), pp. 36-70.

⁶⁸ H. N. COLERIDGE (ed.), *Notes and Lectures upon Shakespeare and some of the old poets and dramatists with other literary remains of S. T. Coleridge*, vol. 2, London, 1849, p. 11. Here Coleridge contrasts Greek beauty with the Gothic sublime.

⁶⁹ GAGE, *Colour and Culture*, p. 69.

⁷⁰ GAGE, "Gothic Glass", pp. 36-58.

⁷¹ DE BRUYNE, *Études d'esthétique médiévale*, vol. 2, p. 81-82.

⁷² W. ARNDT and B. KRUSCH (eds.), *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*, I pt. 2, Hannover, 1885, p. 64.

On other occasions I will address the question of generic levels of style in Gothic art and architecture with a view, in the face of the recent emphasis on *sermo humilis*, to re-emphasising the role of loftiness, magnification and eulogy.⁷³ It seems to me possible to give an account of the imaginative faculty of greatness, wonder and uplift without implicating the Romantic sublime, or without setting out some totalizing set of rules which governed medieval aesthetic experience. Here I have looked at some exceptional buildings, and I would be the first to admit that not all buildings fully succeed in their aims, and that some may not “speak” in terms of delight and uplift. To encounter the ponderous, fortress-like exterior of the cathedral of Albi (ill. 5) – for Albi is magnificent and full of that southern feeling for space discussed by Jean Bony – is not necessarily to experience an aspect of display entirely free of the human will-to-power and admonition. In his account of human, worldly compulsion and supreme power, you will recall, Macrobius in his *Saturnalia* (II:7.5) writes of *timor*, *vis* and *auctoritas*: Albi surely is a display of *auctoritas* and it is not free of *timor*, if not exactly *timor Dei*: fear here is political, social, feudal.

And that is the point: in all such cases architecture is experienced occasionally, ad-propriately (according to circumstances), for there is no more a governing pan-aesthetic order than there is a governing pan-theological order. The point is to get the forces at work into some sort of balance, and to understand the commonalities of experience at work. This seems to me the message of the voices of Girona, the voices of architects and cathedral authorities. In other Iberian instances, as in the case of the inscriptions in the conventual buildings at Las Huelgas, the voice of uplift is both that of the Psalmist and of the building itself, saying *Ad te*



Fig. 5. Albi Cathedral exterior (photo Paul Binski)

⁷³ For my preliminary views on this complex generic issue see P. BINSKI, *Gothic Sculpture*, New Haven and London, 2019, pp. 87-116.

levavi animam meam, Deus meus (Ps. 24:1), the introit for the first Sunday of Advent and the very start of the church year.⁷⁴ Well we might say (Ps. 23:7) *Ad tollite portas principes vestras et elevamini portae aeternales et introibit rex gloriae*. But that is both another Psalm, and another story.

⁷⁴ E. CARRERO, "The creation and use of space in the Abbey of Santa María la Real de Las Huelgas, Burgos: architecture, liturgy, and paraliturgy in a female Cistercian monastery", *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies*, 6/2 (2014), pp. 169-191, at p. 183. Á. CASTRESANA LÓPEZ, *Corpus Inscriptionum Christianarum et Mediaevalium Provinciae Burgensis (ss. IV-XIII)*, Oxford, 2015, pp. 88-96.