

Malcolm Thurlby, *Romanesque Architecture and Sculpture in Wales*. Almeley, Herefs., Logaston Press, 2006, 384 pp., 503 figs. and 15 plates, £17.50

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scientist. Finally, once the Nakamura family was allowed to move to Toronto, the young artist entered and completed studies in the art department of Central Technical High School, which also advocated an association between art and science.

These catalogues admirably tackle the mathematics of Nakamura's work and begin to suggest a relationship between internment and his paintings. Thus we support Kanbara's and Sakamoto's call for other, broader, analyses and interpretations of Nakamura's work. If anything, historically, Nakamura's art has been too closely bracketed by his involvement with Painters Eleven, and now that he is being studied for the first time outside the history of that group, he is possibly being marginalized by the apparent dominance of mathematics *per se* in his art. For example, one area of Nakamura's oeuvre that has virtually never been discussed is his sculpture. The presence of twelve excellent photographs of sculptural work at the end of the last catalogue

without more than passing comment in any of the accompanying essays is a telling example of the incomplete state of scholarship regarding him. Such research might be a useful small step toward a deeper acknowledgement of Nakamura's contribution to Canadian art.

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Note

- 1 The many sides of this debate are not appropriate for this review, and we refer the reader to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_mathematics for a good introduction.

Malcolm Thurlby, *Romanesque Architecture and Sculpture in Wales*. Almeley, Herefs., Logaston Press, 2006, 384 pp., 503 figs. and 15 plates, £17.50.

Logaston Press, with man-behind-the-scenes Andy Johnson, is rapidly gaining a well deserved reputation for publishing quality books about architectural and archaeological subjects at prices that not only make them extremely good value but almost irresistible to the potential purchaser. Malcolm Thurlby's association with Logaston began with his 1997 volume about Dore Abbey and continued with his highly successful study *The Herefordshire School of Romanesque Sculpture* (1999). This was followed with a recent detailed study of Tewkesbury Abbey with Richard K. Morris. A book on Romanesque architecture in Gloucestershire is apparently in preparation. In this latest offering Thurlby has turned his attention to the Romanesque architecture and sculpture of Wales.

The book is divided into eight chapters, some of which have themes that follow chronological and subject orders. Others relate more to regional divisions in the principality. Chapter one deals with Chepstow and Ludlow and includes Chepstow Priory and the great keep at the castle. Recent work at Chepstow by Rick Turner has led to the suggestion that the keep was the work of William the Conqueror, but Thurlby opts for an earlier attribution to William fitz Osbern (1067–71). This would be a very early date for such a great tower, but he argues his case persuasively from the observation of various architectural details (for Turner's own views, see *Chepstow Castle its History and Buildings*, ed. Rick Turner and Andy Johnson, 2006, pp. 40–42, also by Logaston Press). Thurlby suggests the same patron and an early start of construction for Chepstow Priory Church of St

Mary. His description of the priory church is long and very detailed and is probably the most extensive now in print of this long neglected but important church. Ludlow Castle is of course in England but is included here because of its extensive Norman remains and its relevance to buildings in Wales and to West Country Romanesque architecture. Thurlby discusses in detail the unusual dado arcade of the former gate tower, and this expands into an informative account of the development of the cushion capital with the opinions of various experts rehearsed. This includes a valuable discussion of the possible Anglo-Saxon sources of this feature in Anglo-Norman buildings. He goes on to describe the details of the unusual circular chapel in the castle bailey.

Chapter two deals with "Norman Church Architecture of the March and Glamorgan down to 1120." Here Thurlby highlights the series of carved lintels that have survived in the parish churches, characteristics of which he links to Roman sources such as the frigidarium of the Roman baths at Nice-Cimiez (Alpes Maritimes). Chapter three, "Castle, Cathedral and Monastery post 1120," changes tack somewhat. This chapter covers many major monuments: Llandaff Cathedral, Monmouth Priory and Castle, Eweny Priory, St Dogmael's, Margam Abbey, Manorbier, Usk Priory, and Llanthony Priory, as well as several other sites with lesser remains. The relatively brief description of Monkton Priory touches on the possible Cistercian influences in the design of the church, such as in the barrel vault in the south transept. Here I think Thurlby has missed the significance of the Monkton design. My opinion is based on looking beyond the detail to the overall structure, where we can see the remains of a barrel-vaulted nave with lower barrel-vaulted transepts and presumably an original lower barrel-vaulted presbytery. This is

exactly the format that may have existed in the early churches at Cistercian Tintern, Waverley, and possibly Neath, and as such is a remarkable survival in a Benedictine context. This in itself raises questions about the architectural development and influence of aisleless barrel-vaulted churches.

The next three chapters change tack again with sections dealing respectively with buildings erected for Norman patrons in “Church Architecture and Sculpture for Norman Patrons,” then “The Patronage of Gruffudd ap Cynan, Prince of Gwynedd,” and finally “Church Architecture, Shrines and Fonts for Welsh Patrons.” The latter chapter includes a discussion of the important remains of Strata Florida Abbey. It also addresses the issue of its relative dating – a somewhat thorny subject, especially with regard to St Davids Cathedral where close similarities in architectural detail can be seen. Thurlby outlines the documentary evidence and its various interpretations. He then elucidates the basic architectural detail of the church. It must be said that the development of the site is more complex than suggested here, both in changes to the structure and details. Unfortunately my own detailed and more in-depth study of Strata Florida that was prepared for Cadw nearly fifteen years ago has yet to be published.

The penultimate chapter is reserved for a detailed account of St Davids Cathedral, the most Romanesque of Romanesque buildings in Wales. It is a building virtually encrusted with diverse chevron and other ornament – a veritable *tour de force* of the type. The cathedral is one of the most difficult buildings to interpret because of successive rebuilding and is thus the source of considerable variation in opinion amongst architectural historians. This is especially so concerning the difficult subject of whether the nave was ever vaulted in stone. Here Thurlby contends unequivocally that it was, reversing an earlier opinion that any vaults must have been of wood. My opinion, like Thurlby’s, has swung in recent years towards stone vaults – certainly the building was fully prepared to receive them. Readers should be aware that in this argument and especially in invoking a giant order for the original form of the twelfth-century choir, Thurlby has thrown down the gauntlet to other architectural historians, such as Roger Stalley, to publish an alternative reconstruction. (Stalley contends that the nave was never vaulted, and it is worth comparing his views, published in *Pembrokeshire: The Buildings of Wales* [2004], pp. 386–401, with those of Thurlby.) It will in fact be interesting to see if anyone is brave enough to publish a response. The profile of St Davids Cathedral has been on the rise in recent years and, as Thurlby points out, is no longer regarded as an old fashioned provincial building. Explaining such a complex building is extremely difficult, and, unfortunately, the devil is in the detail to such an extent that some readers may find it hard going trying to follow Thurlby’s arguments. Working initially from the re-

mains of the crossing tower to differentiate the building campaigns, he then systematically considers the nave, the choir, and the transepts of the cathedral. Given the complexities, many writers would perhaps balk at the challenge presented in trying to sort out St Davids at all. Thurlby has made a brave attempt, but I’m not sure he has succeeded in a totally convincing manner. Perhaps nobody ever will, but studying enigmatic and complex buildings like St Davids Cathedral is what makes architectural history such an enjoyable pursuit.

Thurlby deals with all the major Romanesque castles and churches in Wales in what might be described as a Pevsnerian manner, but with far more detailed comparative references. He fairly romps through building after building. The focus though is not just on the big monuments but also on more minor works, which are fairly comprehensively covered. In this respect, besides parish churches he also deals with crosses and other similar monuments, and fonts and shrines. Quite wisely he provides the opinions of earlier commentators to achieve a balance of arguments before giving his own views on the relative dating of specific buildings. This is, in this reviewer’s opinion, the way it should be done, rather than giving the author’s opinion in a singular fashion. Comprehensive footnotes and a very useful bibliography show the author has done his homework well. Architectural terms are explained with a basic illustrated glossary that should prove invaluable to the architecturally uninitiated. Here it perhaps should be stated that the book will obviously appeal more to those with a detailed interest in Romanesque architecture and architectural history.

Thurlby has personally viewed most Romanesque architecture and this shows in his wealth of comparisons. How does he remember them all? He not only draws on examples from England but also from Ireland and the continent. Unfortunately, this can sometimes lead to fairly long comparisons that casual readers might find wearisome or confusing. In this respect some aspects of the book are definitely aimed more at Thurlby’s fellow architectural historians. The structure of the book dictates that fonts are discussed on a regional basis, and this produces separate sections in which distinctive styles of fonts are grouped. Throughout the book differences or similarities in design of groups of fonts are highlighted. The final chapter is reserved for conclusions that give an overview of the architecture.

In such a wide-ranging book there will obviously be some omissions. For example, Thurlby omits the fragmentary remains of Pill Priory, a small Tironensian house that includes the eastern crossing arch of the church. Like many Welsh churches, the ruins are very plain, with possible traces of a vault in the crossing. Unfortunately, the foundation date is not known for certain but it could be mid-twelfth century (N.D. Ludlow, *Medieval Archaeology*, 46 [2002], pp. 41–80). *The Buildings of*

Wales suggests ca. 1200. The ruins of Pill Priory are relatively obscure and, given the doubts over its foundation date, its omission is understandable. It is more difficult to account for the omission of Talley Abbey, a major house of Premonstratensian canons, which like Strata Florida was also patronized by Lord Rhys. Like the church at Pill, the architecture of Talley is extremely austere, but in that respect it could have been included to show that Romanesque architecture could be austere and minimalist. Ornamentation depended on funds available for building and also on the attitude to architecture of the religious order involved. At St Davids the canons and bishop obviously wanted a building extensively decorated with sumptuous Romanesque ornament, but this excess was virtually unthinkable at the Cistercian houses (though some chevron is known from Margam, Strata Florida, and Whitland). This variation in ornamentation perhaps also shows that Romanesque or Gothic classifications are sometimes very blurred and uncertain distinctions in the late twelfth century. Romanesque and Gothic are after all modern conceptions and classifications of twelfth-century style in architecture. Contemporary patrons of architecture obviously saw things differently than we do today. Perhaps it may well be that the author discounted both Pill and Talley because of their relatively late or uncertain foundation dates (Talley dates from the mid-1180s, but nevertheless is contemporary with St Davids), and thus he did not regard them as Romanesque. Possibly both these important monuments will be included in a second edition. The author does point out in his preface that however comprehensive he has tried to be some monuments have inevitably escaped notice. Where does one draw that rather blurred Romanesque to Gothic line?

One also wishes for some basic maps to show the locations of all the buildings mentioned in the text. This would not only locate them for readers who may be inspired enough to go and look at the monuments but would also help in giving an overall geographical perspective. In this respect it would perhaps be

relevant to also include a map showing the relative geographical distinction between those areas under Norman and Welsh control in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Unaccountably, but surely the fault of the printer, some of the colour plates are missing from my copy of the book. A few typos have also escaped editing. Thurlby is an excellent photographer and, having photographed some of the same monuments, one must inevitably admire his skill (the former gatehouse tower at Ludlow, for instance, is a veritable black hole). A minority of photographs are a little too dark, and one suspects that this is actually the fault of the printer, as this reviewer has also suffered in the past from the apparent inability of modern printing techniques to reproduce good quality black-and-white images. That said, on the whole the photographs are good and intelligible, and their placements follow the flow of the text – full marks here to Andy Johnson for his layout.

As with Thurlby's earlier work, *The Herefordshire School of Romanesque Sculpture*, this book is surely destined to become the standard reference work for Romanesque architecture and sculpture in Wales, and deservedly so. One must congratulate the author on his energy and staying power in producing such a work – especially, as he explains in the preface, in the face of almost incessant rain on a one-month-long field trip to Wales. Many others would have given up and gone home (as apparently Henry II once did). The book sets Welsh Romanesque in perspective and shows the extent and diversity of the surviving material very well. For those with a specific interest in Romanesque architecture this book is a must-have and for those with a more casual interest it is an invaluable guide for forays around Wales (possibly read in conjunction with the *Buildings of Wales* series). Moreover it is also extremely good value for money.

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Jayne Wark, *Radical Gestures: Feminism and Performance Art in North America*. Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006, 304 pp., 78 illus., \$32.95 paper, \$80 cloth.

While performance art has traditionally prided itself on being a fringe aesthetic – defying conceptual categorization and giving voice to marginalized subjectivities – study of this medium has, by now, grown into an established and methodologically coherent scholarly field. The books that have been instrumental in defining this maverick genre, such as Amelia Jones' *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (1998) or Rebecca Schneider's *Explicit Body in Performance* (1997), are primarily theoretical in their

focus, offering complex readings of performance art through sophisticated blends of post-structuralism, phenomenology, and Lacanian psychoanalysis. Often composed in an improvisational style that, following J.L. Austin's definition of "performative," treats speech as embodied and socially contingent action, these authors take care to foreground the partiality of their critical and historical accounts. In the words of Meiling Cheng, performance art theorists stage "*individual performance[s]* that address both the *exigency of naming* (the edge) and the *ineluctable partiality of the thing named* (the center)."¹

Given this affinity for theoretically inflected close readings, and writing that problematizes historical documentation (for