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## Changing Salisbury: an argument for a return to poetic ordering of urban space following three hundred years of objectification

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This article is concerned with the process of heritage and tradition in relation to urban modification and highlights the current tendency to objectify the past. It looks at significant alterations to the urban conditions of Salisbury since its foundation in the thirteenth century, many of which have concealed and undermined the original relationships structured within, and beyond, the city walls. It suggests that this evolving situation has been governed by differing philosophical ideas rooted in the time when the various additions and demolitions have been undertaken with little regard for the relationships already established within the city, or the needs of the citizens. In order to evaluate the consequences of these changing urban situations, the paper outlines the original intentions behind the foundation and planning of the medieval city and then charts various plans overlaid onto the original layout. This leads to a discussion on the diverse ideas behind the different plans—including issues related to ornament—and thence, a section on the possibilities of reconciliation presented when a more participatory understanding of heritage is utilized: where change and preservation can be facilitated at the same time as accommodating the traditions which underpin much urban space.

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### Introduction

Salisbury has been a successful English city for about eight hundred years. The original thirteenth-century plan of the city has been subject to many interpretations, the most recent of which suggests that the primary relationships within the medieval city were closely linked to the processional rites of the cathedral during the rogation period (Frost, 2009). However, following the gradual retreat of the church from urban life during the later Middle Ages, this ordering appears to have become less significant for the citizens of Salisbury with the result that, by the time the first major alterations to the cathedral and city were undertaken in the late eighteenth century, this medieval ordering survived only as a latent characteristic. Change is necessary, and indeed essential, if cities are to adapt to the shifting demands of their citizens. But in recent times, not only in Salisbury, this evolutionary process has often stifled the life of the city because the justifications for change have been based on limited, instrumental knowledge. By that I mean that the selection of criteria which have been seen as essential when evaluating a place have also declared the limits of their participation in the world and thus the process has imposed unnecessary hegemonies upon the place being evaluated (see Vesely, 2004). As a result of this process, rich territories of mediation established over centuries have often been overwritten and the meaning of landscape reduced to a fraction of its original potential. However, unlike the history of manuscripts and palimpsests where small, unrelated patches of writing are sometimes visible below new layers of script; in the urban realm each succeeding layer which leaves a trace has a coherence linked to the evolving traditions of the city underpinned by concrete relationships. Therefore, it is difficult to apply new ordering structures on top of existing conditions without resistance or reaction from these preceding layers and the people they accommodate. It is the thesis of this paper that the value of heritage and space within a city is less to do with how you see it and more to do with how it is used. Consequently, in the preservation and development of existing places, there is an implicit duty upon the designer to question whether these

layers of history can begin to inform future developments and, through a better understanding of continuity and tradition, offer more complete environments for the habitation of future generations. In order to examine this issue with respect to the history of Salisbury this article is divided into four parts; Section two contains a brief history of some important moments in the urban planning of Salisbury—good and bad; this leads on to section three—an evaluation of the picturesque planning theories which have driven many of these changes; then section four which looks at the role of ornament in the medieval period and suggests that recent changes have not only created limited new possibilities, but also reduced the qualities of the pre-existing conditions; and finally, section five, which introduces a possible way forward that could accommodate the changing nature of urban life within broader cultural horizons by investing in a better understanding of its use (as in the Greek *praxis*) as poetic space.

## The History and Alteration of Salisbury

### The medieval foundation and eighteenth century changes

The city and cathedral of Salisbury were conceived as one entity and built at the beginning of the thirteenth century on land owned by the bishop in a valley below the town of Old Sarum. The new town had all of the basic characteristics of a medieval town; a recognizable street system; a religious centre distinct from the civil centre; city governance was organized to benefit the wealthy burghers—in this case by the bishop; and an identity was established by the consistency of the architecture of the main buildings (Benevolo, 1980). This continuity was particularly clear in Salisbury because the whole city, including the cathedral, was constructed in one period from *circa* 1220 to *circa* 1270. But in addition to the above characteristics, the city seems to have been structured using the processional rites of the cathedral, which annually circumnavigated the city in order to visit the three urban parish churches (Frost, 2009).

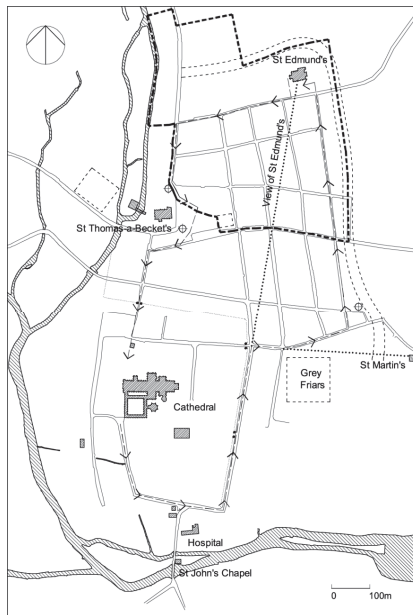


Figure 1. Plan of Salisbury showing the likely route of the third rogation procession on the Vigil of the Ascension in the thirteenth century.

Apart from the addition of the spire in the fourteenth century, the cathedral and city remained relatively untouched by cultural shifts and population growth until around the end of the eighteenth century when the first major restoration and 'conservation and heritage' makeover of the cathedral was undertaken by the architect James Wyatt at the instigation of the then Bishop, Shute Barrington (Dale, 1956). Wyatt began to survey the cathedral and Close around 1787 and handed his final report over to the Dean and Chapter in 1789. The agreement reached with the Dean and Chapter following this report is documented in the *Chapter Acts Book* dated 26<sup>th</sup> August and itemizes some of the works undertaken while Wyatt was in control of the site – albeit *in absentia* for much of his tenure. The list included:

- To varnish and make new canopies to the stalls.
- To build a new pulpit and bishops throne.
- To put new iron rails to the Communion, with a new coping and new blue stone floor.
- To put two wainscot Screens across the aisles.
- To lay new blue stone paving in the Lady Chapel (cut from old grave stones).
- To enrich the side walls to Wyatt's design.
- To clean and color the church.
- To fit up the Morning Chapel.
- To make a new screen to the organ loft to Wyatt's design.
- To remove the beam in the choir.

Much of this list probably formed the basis of Wyatt's initial brief for the works to be done at Salisbury but it also included some of his own suggestions for the 'improvement' of the design and its structural integrity. However, in addition to all of this, some more dramatic changes were also undertaken:

- The north and south porches of the cathedral originally brought down from Old Sarum were taken down.
- The south door near the verger's house was stopped up and another opened near the chapter vestry.
- The chapels in the transept were opened out.
- The choir and the Lady Chapel were joined by the removal of the wall behind the high altar.
- The removal of the Hungerford and Beauchamp Perpendicular Gothic Chapels flanking the Lady Chapel.
- The removal and replacement of some of the stained glass windows (although not all of the changes to the glass took place whilst Wyatt was attached to the cathedral).

These more radical alterations to the cathedral may have been undertaken at the direct request of the bishop following consultations with William Gilpin, Vicar of Boldre in the New Forest, or at the suggestion of Wyatt. Gilpin held great influence over the bishop's artistic and architectural opinions and described his own area of expertise as 'Gothic architecture ... relative to picturesque beauty' (Dale, 1956). He was considered an authority on the subject at the time and, as a canon of the cathedral holding the Prebend of Beaminster, had donated a considerable sum from his own pocket to assist in the development of the cathedral. His initial comments on the alterations seem to have led Wyatt to the idea of opening up the Lady Chapel—both men expressing their enthusiasm for the 'very beautiful piece of perspective' afforded by any view from the choir to the Lady Chapel that would result from these works. However, the removal of this wall necessitated the rearrangement of nearly all the significant tombs in the cathedral into rows underneath the arches of the nave. Even today, this remodeling appears rather heavy handed but it is interesting to note that as late as the nineteen-fifties, Antony Dale, Wyatt's biographer, refers to this 'rearrangement' of the tombs as 'a very reasonable and tidy measure', thus expressing a sympathy for the philosophical ideas of the eighteenth century which tended to judge buildings and artifacts on purely aesthetic grounds.

This 'new' aesthetic, practical and picturesque interpretation of the Gothic style championed by Wyatt and Gilpin also resulted in the destruction of the two perpendicular chapels at the east end, either side of the Lady Chapel, because although they were important historical artifacts, aesthetically the perpendicular was considered a debased kind of Gothic and their dilapidated state—following some destruction during the civil war—meant their renovation was considered unjustifiable. Although it appears that all the various authorities controlling the alterations were in agreement regarding the destruction of these chantry chapels, the move was not universally praised. During the latter part of the eighteenth century, because of the increasing numbers of city dead, there was a move away from churchyard burials to internment in large cemeteries outside the city boundaries involving the removal of some existing tombs and the exhumation of human remains (Worpole, 2003). This was controversial and although, at the time, the preservation of funerary monuments was considered to be an important duty of any age, practical solutions to difficult problems required many taboos to be broken.

The fact that all of these alterations were planned and undertaken with little or no sense of the original ordering of the cathedral and its setting is interesting and disappointing. The same could also be said of the demolition of the campanile, which stood in the Close half way between the north portal of the cathedral and the main gate leading to the city. The tower, in this critical location, offered a significant opportunity for the clergy to represent the temporal ordering of the medieval city as a whole—allowing the measurement of time to be seen as distinct from the main body of the cathedral, and hence separate from the rule of the bishop and canons (see Frost, 2009). At a time in the medieval period when the urban landscape was beginning to adapt to the requirements of the emerging merchant classes, this symbolic separation of the measurement of time from the cathedral cannot be underestimated. Again, no repairs had been undertaken since the civil war and the two upper stages, made from timber, had been removed in 1758 following a chapter meeting when the whole building was considered 'neither useful nor ornamental'. So in 1790 they moved the clock and the bells into the cathedral and demolished the remaining parts of the bell tower in order to open up the north-west view of the building within its newly planned 'picturesque' setting.



Figure 2. View of the cathedral across the picturesque Close

Wyatt did improve some aspects of the site, introducing proper drainage and resurfacing the paths, but overall his involvement suggests the first major remodeling of the cathedral and its setting was orchestrated using the ideals of the day with little regard for the underlying order or surviving traditions related to the site. Here, an attitude to conservation and heritage can already be discerned where reliance on the interrogation of buildings as objects was prioritized over an understanding of architecture seen as a part of a broader cultural setting. If, as it seems, that the active clergy at the time were in philosophical agreement with the forces for modernization then it suggests that there will always be moments in history when such alignments, allied with political power, can lead to regressive preservation and wholesale destruction. The next question to be asked is whether later alterations have resulted in equally limiting results.

### Contemporary Alterations

The arrival of the railway in the nineteenth century did affect the overall landscape of the city, but because of the distance allowed between the new tracks and the old centre (including one railway tunnel in the northern approach to Salisbury) it had little impact on the primary city spaces preserved from the medieval period. However, the development of the main roads within the boundaries of the medieval city have harmed the atmosphere of city as a whole even though the initial plans for a ring road were based on sound planning judgment. The problem was that much of the traffic on the main through route from London to the South West came through the centre of Salisbury and in 1947, the time of the first road development plan, this was seen to be a situation which could only worsen. But also—perhaps bolstered by the new opportunities presented by the bombsites of postwar Britain—planners at the time felt comfortable in driving solutions to containable problems right into the heart of cities. So, rather than skirting Salisbury with a new ring road built at a safe distance from the city centre, the plan directed the traffic onto large new roads cut through the historic centre. In the end this radical scheme was avoided, but an inner ring-road was eventually constructed between 1962-69. Again, I am sure this can be justified in rational terms but its impact on the spaces of the city has been critical.

Aside from these traffic management debacles, the retail planning policy has led to the construction of three inner city shopping centers; Old George Shopping Centre built in 1965 and extensively upgraded in the mid 1990s; then CrossKeys Shopping centre; and most recently the Maltings, built in an old fifteenth-century grain mill. All of these shopping centers have taken business away from some more visible locations of the city with the result that overall street activity has been reduced and many retail premises in key positions are vacant.

In the latest bid for change, the Dean and Chapter held a competition for the development of a Magna Carta museum within the Close itself. The initial competition resulted in no clear winner and after further consultation, UK architects Dixon Jones were appointed to develop a scheme to the south of the cloister. In Dixon Jones' own description of the aims of the project they list nine points:

- To house Magna Carta in an appropriate manner.
- To have an exterior with a low visual impact on the highly sensitive surroundings.
- To realize the benefit to the public of the south view of the cathedral.
- To have an interior that compliments the adjacent Cathedral interiors.
- To provide suitable context for the exhibition material.
- To respond to the need for public facilities.
- To reflect the cathedral's education program.
- To provide long term flexibility in use.
- To make the most of low energy efficiency.

On the face of it all of the points are very reasonable, but one could argue that they are also inane. By turning every sentence into a negative we find that most of the points are self evident—why would you choose to house Magna Carta in an 'inappropriate' manner or not 'respond to the need for public facilities'? Only two points suggest an architectural strategy: that of a 'low visual impact' and the 'opening of the south view of the cathedral'. The latter can be undertaken without reference to the building but the former appears to be completely at odds with the attitude towards all the renovation and 'improvements' undertaken since the eighteenth century up to and including the imposition of the ring road in 1969. But is it really any different? Both suggest that the cathedral should be understood as an object, framed and placed within a very particular landscape; a landscape immortalized by Constable, among others, over the past two hundred years (for example in Constable's *View of Salisbury* 1823).

This new and apparently tender attitude, which underpins the structuring of the landscape by organizing key views, appears to be as close as all these projects get to the articulation of an urban environment and, as a result, the urban environment itself has become objectified: understood as distinct from its everyday usage. Within this situation the heritage industry buys its buildings, maintains them, charges admission and thereby accentuates the dislocation between the everyday world and the built object—now similar to an object in a museum but in this case still present in the heart of the city. And, because of this difficult juxtaposition, the landscape surrounding the object is inevitably designed to reinforce the prejudice of the object rather than create a more differentiated situation similar to the ambiguities present in the rest of the city.

But one can go further. This tendency towards objectification is not sympathetic to the way that these buildings were originally conceived or built. It is not the way that they were used, nor does it suggest a way in which we can begin to foster a better love and respect for our environment and our past. Why couldn't the museum at Salisbury have a high visual impact within the surroundings? Why are the surroundings seen to be more sensitive than anywhere else? Do we really think that all of the architects involved in the competition for the new museum at Salisbury would not have enhanced the setting of the medieval cathedral which currently remains isolated in an artificial, picturesque, eighteenth-century landscape? In the end good architecture and good heritage will always depend on good judgment; and it is this trust in good judgment that is so often lacking in the way we currently address the landscapes within which we live and work. The problem is that although it is easier to judge a piece of heritage once it has been separated from its contemporary context—both spatial and cultural—in objectifying the building or place concerned the whole idea of value itself is inadvertently questioned at the same time. To describe this problem in Salisbury more directly we need to evaluate the ideas of the picturesque in the eighteenth and nineteenth century which underpin the intellectual basis for most of the planning changes outlined above.

### Salisbury and the Picturesque

The emergence of the idea of 'style' itself as a way of categorizing the complicated theoretical horizons of the eighteenth and nineteenth century is a topic beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the emergence of the picturesque style during this period was a direct response to the rationalizing tendencies of the Enlightenment. The more mankind used reason as the primary measure, the more there emerged a need for a different set of measures which dealt with the other facets of life not subject to the laws of reason. As a result, emotion and beauty, two key facets of this unreasoned world began to be described in terms of taste and the sublime (Bergdoll, 2000, Harries, 1998. Vesely, 2004).

It has been argued that the rapid development of the Picturesque in urban design first emerged as a response to the growing disapproval of the rectilinear street plans of the Renaissance (Kostof, 1991) which were also perhaps viewed as an example of the implementation of reason on the lived world. Edmund Burke, the philosopher of the Picturesque, writing *A Philosophical enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* in 1757, articulated this dissatisfaction by describing his preference for the Gothic Style in all things suggesting that its key qualities of 'gloominess, roughness, and daunting scale [were] key spurs to sublime emotion'. In the early years of the movement this romantic association suggested an order where personal mood and expression, moderated by good taste, could substitute for

any form of communality not based on reason. Although Wyatt's work at Salisbury coincided with the early stages of the Gothic Revival (both Fonthill Abbey—designed by Wyatt—and Strawberry Hill were built in the latter half of the eighteenth century) it was not until later, particularly in the shadow of a vast church building program during the nineteenth century, that the picturesque developed into a reaction against the idea of modernity itself and began to gain real momentum in the planning sphere. By the 1830s, what had been a simple stylistic preference became less a personal or local preference and more a matter relating to definitions of national and local identity (Bergdoll, 2000).

The new town of Bournemouth, begun in the 1830s, was an early example of this transference of picturesque ideals of beauty, composition and the sublime to the urban environment, where the planner utilized curved streets and understood the landscape as an object to be viewed. Decimus Burton (1800-1881), the architect of the town after 1842 wrote: 'The wooded valley through which the Bourne runs to the sea is and must always constitute the principal object of the landscape ... As a general principle in designing a building plan for Bournemouth, formality should be carefully avoided' (Aston & Bond, 1976).

The use of these picturesque asymmetries as a way of making townscape became even more clearly defined in the twentieth century when such layouts were often described as embodying a form of 'non urban imagery' (Kostof, 1991)—an association almost unthinkable for a medieval burgher of Salisbury for whom the order of the city was the image of civilization. Medieval man saw no distinction between the world he inhabited and the spiritual world, 'reality was not that the heavenly world was as real as the earthly world, it was that they formed one world, in an extricable mixture which caught men in the toils of a living supernatural' (Le Goff, 2001). It was, therefore, within the artifice of the urban environment that meaning and order in the medieval world were most clearly manifested. In contrast to this deep understanding of order, the Picturesque movement saw only aesthetic relationships and thus it was their preference for asymmetry rather than the meanings inherent in the medieval landscape that drew them to the Gothic instead of the regular structures of the Renaissance.

These factors all combined to create the theoretical setting for the alterations which took place in Salisbury up to and including the twentieth century. On the one hand there was the evolution of 'picturesque urban planning' with its curved streets and 'anti-urban' imagery, and the other, a medieval city with a pre-existing exemplar of Early English Gothic ready for the planning make-over. In 1947 Thomas Sharp writes in relation to his new road plan for the city within the curtilage of the old medieval city defenses:

Although the great spire of the cathedral dominates the city in a hundred views, it is nearly always seen rising sheer over a broken sea of golden roofs. There are no monumental vistas; there are even very few direct views. This is as it should be. But one new direct view is suggested in this plan, for dramatic effect ... a view down the suggested road running towards New Street from the proposed square in Fisherton Street. This view will be far wider than any at present in the city: but with the curve of the streets and the river flowing beside the roadway, it will still be entirely informal and in character with the rest of the city'.

Within this statement all the prejudices of picturesque planning are clearly stated in support of a new orderliness which is planted on an unsuspecting city without recourse to the meaning or identity of the existing place. Sharp attempts to justify the interventions using a language he claims has arisen from the city itself and then, in the book, presents a perspective utilizing a raised viewpoint which bears no relation to the possible vistas realized within the planning strategy itself. His own history of town planning, published in 1936, glosses over the medieval period referring only to economics and patronage as critical factors affecting urban development with little sense of the way the spaces were used—generally or ceremonially. This disengagement with the actual condition of the city and its inhabitants allowed him later to revise his views on town center planning, suggesting that 'the only private traffic permitted within a town-center should be traffic associated with the permanent occupancy and the functioning of the buildings and utilities within it' (Sharp 1968). Luckily for him his earlier plan for Salisbury had not been implemented. But on a broader level, can we even say that his observations clear and irrefutable? Is Salisbury 'informal'? Is it true there are no 'monumental vistas'? Can a singular view from a space of no civic value be classified as 'dramatic' purely by reference to its scale?

This article does not set out to describe every aspect of the city plan of Salisbury, nor is it an inventory of the expansion which took place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But it is already clear from the changes described that there is an underlying attitude towards the urban identity of Salisbury which has engaged only with certain facts evident within a limited horizon. In contrast to the modern plans and alterations described above which wish to determine all aspects of participation from the basis of a limited rational discourse, the medieval plan concentrated on establishing a primary participatory order for the city and then allowed other agencies to develop secondary relationships to help configure the remaining aspects of the city plan (Frost, 2009). Of course suburbs have grown up around Salisbury, each relating to different economic classes and different spatial ideas, but aside from this, the planners of the modern city seem to have missed a real opportunity to evolve and develop the primary order originally established in the medieval period. This processional order was grounded in the idea that a city was not just a grouping of buildings that can be evaluated as objects independent of their setting but a body of people (*civitas*) who constantly participated in the revelation of their identity through the activities which were undertaken in and around the city. Everything from the stocks and the pillory placed in the town square; to the parish and city boundaries beaten with birch and willow; to the supplication of

the clergy for a good harvest and a divine blessing for the forthcoming year—testified to this reciprocity between place and action: between occupation and belonging.

But before alternative methods of evaluation can be presented which incorporate these issues, the effect of new ideals on the extant 'objects' themselves needs to be evaluated because the limited horizons of the picturesque can also be seen to affect much of the latent identity of the existing fabric of the city. In its most embodied form, the dialectic of 'occupation and belonging' which underpinned the spatial ordering of the city discussed above was also evident within the ornamental programmes of the cathedral and, due to the extensive processions which often went beyond the boundaries of the cathedral Close, extended into the city as a whole. It is difficult to know exactly how this transition from cathedral to city was understood or articulated during these processions, but it is clear that ornament, like the buildings, was altered by objectification.

## Ornament and Engagement

Much of the language of the picturesque suggests a thorough and significant understanding of the role of ornament, both in buildings as well as in ideas of urban planning. But this confidence is misplaced. It has already been suggested that the way medieval burghers would have experienced their city was different to that of the nineteenth-century citizens. This variance is similarly evident in the difference between ornament and decoration—words that are commonly used interchangeably but describe quite different conditions. In *The Ethical Function of Architecture* Karsten Harries offers a concise description of the difference which suits the purpose of the discussion here: '... I shall call decoration that articulates a communal ethos *ornament* and decoration that we experience primarily as an aesthetic addition to a building *decoration*. So understood, *decoration is the aesthetic analogue to ornament*' (Harries, 1998). It is this communal ethos inherent to ornament which was so critical to the ideas concerning representation in the Middle Ages.

Treatises on the uses of ornament/decoration in architecture go back to the classical world and, like so many other issues that were significant during the Middle Ages, key comments can be traced back to Plato. Although he did not address the use of ornament in architecture *per se*, his discourses on the use of rhetoric were seen to be relevant to the debate. Plato believed that true rhetoric is dialectic itself, but rhetoric used to serve its own ends, particularly by the Sophists who used it without recourse to ethos or justice, had no value. In the *Gorgias* he develops this argument equating the arts that care for the body (gymnastics and medicine) with the political arts which care for the soul (legislation and justice). He continues: 'Sophistic is to legislation what beautification is to gymnastics, and rhetoric to justice what cookery is to medicine' and that if the 'soul' defers decision making to the 'body' in these matters then eventually the understanding of the difference will be lost (*Gorgias*, 464c-465e). This description of the aim and root of rhetoric also describes the difference between ornament and decoration as understood in the Middle Ages. Even in Vitruvius' Ten Books, written in the first century BC, the notion of *decorum*, borrowed from Cicero's *De officiis*, led to descriptions of the correct procedures and appearances for different building types where ornament was not seen as a separate entity from the other aspects of building. However, by the beginning of the Renaissance with Alberti the beginning of a movement away from this sentiment can already be seen (Alberti, 1965). Alberti divided structure and decoration into separate chapters, with ornament and beauty (*pulchritudo et ornamentum*) being covered in Book VI. 'Before Alberti there was no hint of the separation between structure and ornament. For Vitruvius and other writers, a building had been an integrated whole from the finest carving on its surface to the unformed rubble of its core' (Onians, 1988).

This new approach to decoration did not totally replace the earlier ethical ornament—particularly where the ornament related to a person and a community and their way of dwelling—but placed it within a competing field which lasted several centuries until the final flourishes of ornamentation were evident in the designs of the Baroque (Vesely, 2004). After this, decoration reigned supreme. As Harries states: 'When we call and understand the philosophy of art first of all as aesthetics, we are the heirs of a quite specific approach to art, one that, even though its long prehistory goes back to the Renaissance and indeed to antiquity, triumphed only in the eighteenth century, over an older approach that would not grant autonomy to art, instead assigning it a religious, a social, or an ethical function. Think to a medieval altarpiece' (Harries, 1998).

In the medieval period it was not just that the iconography was recognisable and used didactically but that the core ontological meanings of the culture were embodied in the structure and ornamentation of these great edifices. The aim of the whole work was not to create an aesthetic object but to attempt 'to address humanity's deepest concerns' (Harries, 1998). At Salisbury, the argument for a the interpretation of a processional ordering of the city and cathedral relates to the articulation of some of these concerns, particularly insofar as the processional enactments can be seen to reveal Augustine's threefold explication of time as experienced—*memoria, contuitus and expectation* (Frost, 2009). This threefold structure of the experience of time can be paired with the representational horizons of time as a whole thus linking processional temporality with that inherent to ornament. Peter Carl describes these three horizons thus: The 'three horizons of time [are]... the temporality of origins, time orientated as regeneration (the permanence of temporal succession and renewal), and the dramatic time of human events in history (conceived as re-enactment). ... ornament [being] the most familiar vehicle by which these relationships are articulated' (Carl, 1992).

The ornamental program evident within the cloister at Salisbury Cathedral was clearly a part of this tradition where the natural stone foliate bosses established a tension with the temporal variation of nature within the cloister.

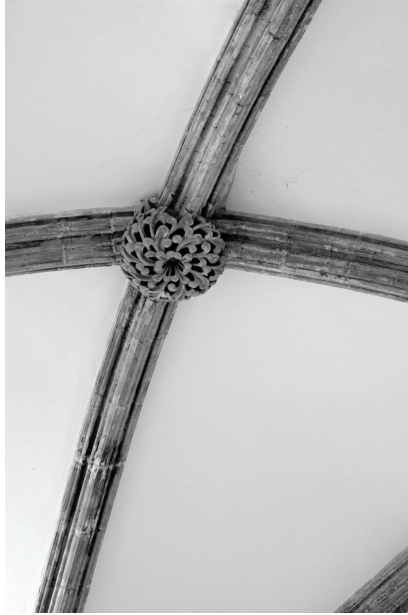


Figure 3. View of foliate bosses on the vaults of the cloister at Salisbury

The square cloister—representing the quartered universe and the four rivers of paradise—was linked to the physical world and thus to the first creative act. On the one hand, the formality of the garden was related to the perfection of Eden, but on the other, it stood for the realm of creativity—the garden as gift associated with the inconceivable act of creation itself (Frost, 2009).

But one could also argue that this type of ornamental understanding could be extended to the architecture in relation to the city. Throughout the processions, the cathedral and the three main city churches were periodically seen and then obscured. The views were not constructed to establish the primacy of sight in ways familiar to the articulation of Renaissance urban space, but rather as moments of orientation which fell in and out of sight in the same way that they only occasionally engaged the other senses. To see the ecclesiastical architecture as ornaments to the urban setting is perhaps the best way to describe the relationship between these two experiences (city and cloister). It also explains why it has been relatively easy to ignore the deep layers of articulation inherent to the place when much of the later philosophical understanding of ornament had reduced all such endeavors to aesthetic decoration. For Kant, writing in the mid eighteenth century, ornament could be experienced without these layers of meaning purely as an aesthetic object (Harries, 1983). However, if 'the architectural function of ornament is ... bracketed, and ornament is understood as an abstract art *sui generis* ... [as] it casts off its servitude and becomes absolute ... ornament ceases to function as such: it dies as ornament only to be reborn as art for art's sake'. (Harries, 1998) And, as Foucault describes: 'if we limit ourselves to this type of always partial and local inquiry or test, do we not run the risk of letting ourselves be determined by more general structures of which we may well not be conscious, and over which we may have no control?' (Foucault, 1984)

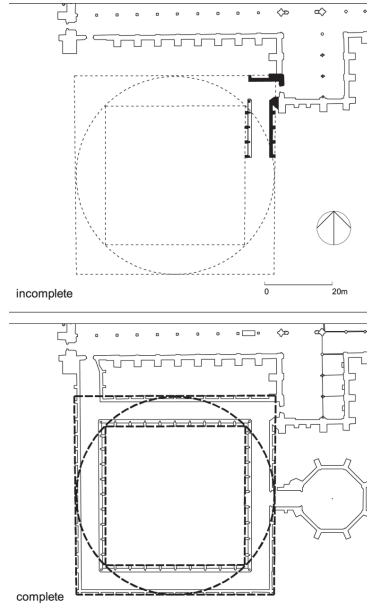


Figure 4. Plan of Salisbury Cathedral cloister with key dimensions and relationships indicating the final size and shape of the cloister from the first stages of the construction

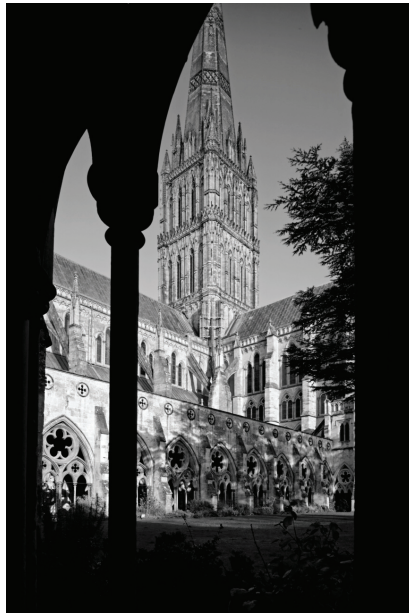


Figure 5. View of the Salisbury Cathedral cloister from the western range

It is not the purpose of this paper to attempt to fully describe the meaning or the theory behind the nature of ornament in the Middle Ages and its critical relationship to temporality ignored during later alterations to the city. But it is worth reiterating at this point that the capacity for ornament 'to attract the genetic numerologies and geometric sequences of *anologia/proportio* or *logos/ratio*, and the speculation which attends that work, could only sustain itself within a fundamental concern for the embodiment of temporality, manifest as a structure of mediation between origins and oriented time, between eternity and the possibility of history'. (Carl 1991) Therefore, it must be acknowledged that any attempt to reintroduce particular ornamental regimes conceived and presented as a tradition reduced to a series of aesthetic rules is by definition, doomed to failure. Ornament is a manifestation of cultural ethos, it cannot create one.

I am not arguing here for a return to a more embodied use of ornament—although that would not necessarily be a bad thing—but for the recognition that the changes undertaken in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reduced even existing examples of ornament to mere decoration. And, even more worryingly, as time went on, the full depth of the representational field offered by ornament was no longer accessible at all because the understanding of the relationship between ornament and communal ethos lost.

The point of this relationship is that it is not static; it evolves. The additions to medieval cathedrals during periods where ornament was valued as a manifestation of communal ethos did not challenge the order of the initial ornamental programs but added to them; older traditions are still visible beneath or beside the new ones—Canterbury's Trinity chapel (1220) added to the earlier Norman cathedral; or Westminster Abbey's Henry VII Lady chapel (1509) testify to this phenomenon. A phenomenon to a certain degree denied in Salisbury Cathedral as a result of the demolition of the chantry chapels and the radical reworking of the interior perspective by Wyatt; and in the Close by the demolition of the campanile and the reduction in height of the churchyard wall. In the same way that the removal of the choir screen changed the way the building is used and ultimately challenged the communal representational possibilities of the cathedral as a whole, the remodeled exterior reduced a great monument of the people to an object for contemplation set outside its festive origins. It can no longer be used in the same way; the objectification of the building reduces its cultural impact to the same degree that it increases its aesthetic potential. It is perhaps then unsurprising that the prevailing interpretation of the architecture of the Middle Ages is one of tectonic clarity and technical bravado where the underlying meaning of the work is deemed secondary to the realization of a vast technological project. In reality, however, the cathedral embodies complex relationships: it is not itself a complicated object.

In the light of this discussion one can understand why the poverty of thought underpinning much modern development has produced so much poor architecture, but it is perhaps more difficult to forgive the associated tendency which has reduced past greatness to current mediocrity. Any attempt to find a new way forward out of this situation must, therefore, begin to address some of these complex issues. It will not necessarily result in a new ornamental program as complete as has been experienced in the past, but it must begin to address aspects of being-in-the-world which acknowledge a greater part of our humanity and allow the ethos of the community to present itself. In the last section of this paper this question will be addressed in relation to inhabitation and use which form the basis of a possible reconciliation of belonging and building, described by Heidegger as 'poetic creation', which lets us dwell, and is a kind of building (Heidegger, 1971a). But in looking at this discussion it must be borne in mind that 'Poeticalness is not a supplementation of discourse with rhetorical adornment but a total re-evaluation of the discourse and of all of its components ...'. (Jakobson, 1960)

## The Use of Poetic Space

Although much of the philosophical writing on poetics, like ornament, relates to the use of language it is clear that the main issues also apply to spatial relationships and more particularly to the idea of the creative act in general. There are numerous philosophers who have written on this idea of poetics related to space, notably Heidegger (1971, 1967), Gadamer (1975, 1986), Bachelard (1969) and Merleau-Ponty (1962) to name but a few. But the discourse can be traced back to Plato who suggests in his Symposium that '*every kind of artistic creation is poetry*' (*Symposium*, 204b). Aristotle appears to agree with this sentiment when he defines the work of art as '*mimesis of praxis*'—as a representation of people doing or experiencing something (*Poetics*, 1450b3-4). Heidegger confirms this: '*Making is, in Greek *poiesis**', but he continues with a word of caution: '*This does not mean, though, that the poetic is merely an ornament and bonus added to dwelling. Nor does the poetic character of dwelling mean merely that the poetic turns up in some way or another in all dwelling. Rather, the phrase "poetically man dwells" says: poetry first causes dwelling to be dwelling*' (Heidegger, 1971a).

But this definition of the poetic the act of creation is not without its difficulties and over the centuries there have been many instances when the tension present within the making, or interpreting, of particular situations has been reduced in scope to enable more concise evaluations and conclusions. The primary issue is that we are within the very experience we are trying to evaluate—linguistically, historically and spatially. As Gadamer says: '*We are always within the situation, and to throw light on it is a task never entirely completed. This is also true of the ... situation in which we find ourselves with regard to the tradition we are trying to understand*' (Gadamer, 1975). So the first concession that must be made in attempting to evaluate places poetically is that conclusions will never be complete, they can only ever be

approximations to the actual situation. The key question therefore, is what are the primary aspects which should form the basis of any poetic evaluation?

Over the course of the alterations to Salisbury the urban space appears to have been analyzed using certain limited references, or, more precisely, by using closed systems which did not offer meaning beyond their immanent context or 'sense', i.e. they offered little more of the city or the world as a whole beyond the limits of the original conception itself. These artificial 'limits' premiated within the rational discourses consigned all other factors relating to the place as either subjective or emotional and therefore of lesser value. That there may have been some aspects of reality which could be shared and defined, but were not facts or things described by facts, was missing—as was the recognition of the relationship between the author of the space who 'intended' it and the viewer who 'interprets' or 'uses' it. A more poetic evaluation prior to the implementation of any changes would not have had this limiting effect because it would have resisted the obliteration of the other references by preserving them within a more ambiguous framework. In doing so, this broader shift in priority would have led away from a multi-valency—where all meaning is lost in the relativism of the idea of subjective interpretation—towards a 'fusion of horizons'—where creator and viewer first recognize their primary relationship to the world as a whole—with its specific, shared, cultural horizon. It is upon this ground that poetic space can be communicated, understood and shared because fundamentally, 'understanding is an inter-subjective process' (Ricoeur, 1977). This way of thinking about space is not new and was present, in different forms, in the Middle Ages and particularly in the eighteenth century where 'the unity of Baroque space [for example, was] established by the metaphorical structure of space, which has the capacity to hold together different arts and at the same time meet all the important conditions of practical life, decorum and ethos' (Vesely, 2004).

Accepting, then, that the evaluation of the situation at hand can only ever be partially completed, and that the primary relationship of the spaces to be evaluated is to the world as given, it is the first task of the designer to evaluate the existing conditions of the spaces in question and to try to reveal something of their latent qualities—qualities which form the deep background of the natural world but often lack explicit articulation. The suggested processional ordering of Salisbury (Frost, 2009) would have allowed these latent qualities of the urban space to be manifested through liturgical rites within the cathedral and on the streets of the city. But to ascertain whether the themes present in these rituals can be reconnected within the contemporary city, where the population is primarily secular and the processions no longer pass through the streets, this theological context must be reinterpreted ontologically.

To begin first with the theology, John Cassian (360-435) established a fourfold structure for biblical exegesis which he adapted to include spatial relationships:

Jerusalem can be taken in four senses: historically [literally], as the city of the Jews, allegorically as the Church of Christ [in the sense of the institution rather than the building], anagogically as the Heavenly City of God 'which is mother of us all' (Gal. 4:26), tropologically, as the soul of man, which is frequently subject to praise or blame from the Lord often under this title'. (Cassian in Wace 1894)

Paul Ricoeur, writing more recently on metaphor, suggests that there are four modes of discourse; the scientific, the poetic, the religious and the speculative (Ricoeur, 1977). These two configurations can be associated relatively clearly where; literal meaning becomes scientific discourse; tropological meaning becomes poetic discourse; allegorical meaning becomes religious discourse; and anagogical meaning becomes speculative discourse. As we have seen already, the literal/scientific interpretation does not reveal the full depth of the situation. But this simple matching of pairs also reveals that the tropological/poetic interpretation cannot complete the analysis. However, it does suggest that there is something common, or shared, in this tropological/poetic mode of discourse and that it is here that the artist/poet can begin to reveal the fullness of meaning embodied in all four modes.

In the *Rule of Metaphor*, Paul Ricoeur discusses the role of poetics in language and suggests that

poetry does not seek to prove anything at all: its project is mimetic; its aim ... is to compose an essential representation of human actions; its appropriate method is to speak the truth by means of fiction, fable, and tragic muthos' (Ricoeur, 1977).

By that he means that good poetics is rooted in metaphor where relationships are understood through an 'intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars' (Aristotle, *Poetics 1459a7*) and thus the observer is forced to see the thing again in a new context without ever suspending his belonging to the world. This type of experience is both the means by which meaning is developed and nurtured as well as the source of meaning in the first place. But the engagement of mimesis in this process — this live transference of meaning — is also dependent on some 'making'. In making, suggests Dalibor Vesely,

mimesis reveals the mystery of order as a tension between its potential and actual existence, which ultimately always points toward the ultimate order—the cosmos. It is in this sense that the re-enactment of cosmic order can be seen as a primordial form of making. Mimetic making, which precedes the formation of technē, takes place most often in the domain of ritual' (Vesely, 2004).

Therefore, poetics can only exist where there is a 'mimesis of praxis'—the imitation of an action—when things are understood in a state of activity, and the communicative nature of place is both centered in what it is (in relation to the actual action in the world) but also what it is not (in relation to that which it imitates or re-enacts).

If we employ this understanding in an evaluation of the ordering of the medieval city we find that the processions revealed both the boundedness of the city through the circumnavigation of the three intramural parish boundaries, and also its fundamental ordering based on medieval notions of temporality (Frost 2009)



Figure 6. Collage showing the hypothetical view as it would have been in the 13th century looking south down Minster Street towards the church of St Thomas-à-Becket with the cathedral and bell tower in the background

But 'boundedness' here must be viewed in its broadest sense; Heidegger reveals that boundary in the classical world is not a limit but '... as the Greeks recognized, ... is that from which something *begins its presencing*. That is why the concept is that of *horismos*, that is, the horizon' (Heidegger 1971b). Thus, for the medieval citizen of Salisbury, the ritual ordering at the heart of the urban plan revealed, among other things, the latent themes of foundation and origin, return and renewal, and purification and cleansing linked to a common perception of the horizon of being itself – here mediated explicitly by the rituals of the church.

This structure, built into the city but only revealed explicitly on the rogation feast days, was latent for the remainder of the year. That is not to say that it was not accessible at other times, only that the relationship was made explicit during these processions. The fact that this temporal ordering was the primary order of the city—relating back to both the creation of the city and the teleological horizons of Christianity—is significant and suggests that any development of the structure of the city should take this into consideration. But on a more important level, this suggestion has the effect of shifting the focus away from objects onto spaces and, more particularly, the use of spaces. If the cathedral space had been understood poetically then it is unlikely that the removal of the divisions of the cathedral by Wyatt would have been sanctioned because they would have acknowledged the fact that the Baptistery, Main Altar and Trinity Chapel formed the three basic elements of the Carolingian ecclesia (Erlande-Brandenburg 1994) and their unification would reduce the poetic reading of the cathedral—even if it did fulfill the contemporary ideas of 'picturesque gothic'. There would have been other ways to fulfill the requirements of any liturgical developments. The same is also true of the inner ring road which truncated many established intramural relationships and could have been executed in a more sympathetic manner.

## Conclusion

This article has set out to explore some of Salisbury's current urban problems and, through a description of the poetic qualities of space, suggest that poetics could be a fertile ground for the future assessment and setting of situations—particularly ones where the existing ground appears loaded with meaning such as Salisbury. It has tried to realign the fourfold interpretive schema outlined by Cassin which led to the original ordering of the city with more contemporary ontological horizons to suggest that the preservation and upkeep of built heritage needs to relate to the contemporary situation so that value—in its broadest sense—can be attributed properly to the life-world. The success of such an operation used as a working method in other locations would rely on a thorough study of the existing conditions and activities within the city as well as the primary acceptance that movement, action and inhabitation are the best measure for preservation and enhancement



Figure 7. St Georges Day Procession, Salisbury 2010

In Salisbury, during their newly reconstituted civic processions on St George's Day, the town's mayor and retinue complete a meager procession in and around the market square whereas the towns folk retire to Victoria park to the north of the city for their own celebrations. Throughout the day the Close remains unsullied by all of the town's festivities and, as a consequence, at a time of civic gathering, is ignored by all the local people; it remains isolated, if still visited by the curious tourist. The path to re-engage the cathedral with the city is not a difficult one; it merely requires a more differentiated attitude to be ascribed to the value of our surviving heritage. Value must, in the end, rest in the ability of the building to connect with real issues of real people and in the possibility of reengagement with the everyday life of the city. In order to assess this potential, the latent poetic nature of every situation needs to be evaluated as an equal partner to any reasoned spatial analysis or preservation plan, even if there appears to be a consensus on the changes that need to occur—as happened in the development of the cathedral under Wyatt. Even now, such an analysis with respect to the housing of Magna Carta could result in a much bolder architecture in respect of the cathedral—possibly linked to a larger civic festival on St Georges Day. This is particularly interesting as the urge to construct the cathedral and write Magna Carta both emerged from a healthy respect for tradition married to an honest disdain for the very authority whose agreement was sought for their generation.

Ricoeur sums up this need for greater poetic understanding in all our endeavors when he says:

Poetic discourse brings to language a pre-objective world in which we find ourselves already rooted, but in which we also project our innermost possibilities. We must thus dismantle the reign of objects in order to let be, and allow to be uttered, our primordial belonging to a world which we inhabit, that is to say, which at once precedes us and receives the imprint of our works. In short, we must restore to the fine word invent its twofold sense of both discovery and creation'.

Therefore, in the future, if we wish to preserve our cities more successfully care must be taken in the evaluation of the buildings and places of the past as well as their poetic conditions (past and present) so that we can ensure that references, both evident and oblique, are utilized, preserved or enhanced in change.

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