

HUMOURING THE HUMOURS

An Introduction to the Comedic Gothic of Cram and Goodhue in the United States and Canada

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When Kenneth Clark summarized his landmark study of *The Gothic Revival* (1928), he argued that "Gothic depends on detail, and the individual architect, however gifted, is powerless without a body of good craftsmen."¹ Clark admitted, of course, that there were some technically skilled artisans in the Gothic Revival; but they could not, in his estimation, capture the "irrecoverable moods" of authentic Gothic ornaments that sprang "spontaneously from sentiment."² Clark concluded of the Gothic Revival thusly:

their detail never ceased to be tame and self-conscious. Their madonnas were always genteel, their saints always venerable, but—ter would not melt in their angels' mouths; and the awful events of the Apocalypse were conducted with the decorum of a garden party.³

In other words, the tepid and all-too-sincere piety of the Gothic Revival doomed its architecture to lack the requisite moods of medieval sentiment: a sense of awe, on the one hand, and a sense of humour on the other—the same sense of humour, ironically, that Clark used to mock the "garden party" decorum of a modern Gothic Apocalypse.

Perhaps, in an age of scientific enlightenment and reasonable doubt, it is fair to say that modern Gothic architects and artisans could not hope to achieve the awful fear of hell that Clark deemed essential to apocalyptic medieval carvings. But, were Gothic Revival churches really so humourless? To be sure, there remains a posthumous perception that



FIG. 1. THE NEW ST. MARY'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, WALKERVILLE, ON. | CAMERON MACDONELL

medieval Christians took their religion too seriously to allow comedy to sully their churches.⁴ And thus, under the influence of that perception, some modern Gothic artists may have striven to revive the sincerity of medieval faith at the expense of its comedy; but certainly not all of them. In a 1930 preface to a book on Gothic gargoyles, American architect Ralph Adams Cram (1863-1942) specifically fought against that sombre perception:

Just because [the medieval faithful] were a sincerely religious people and involved in the sacraments, services and practises of their religion from the day of birth to that of death—and after—it is [wrongly] assumed that this must have knocked all the gaiety out of life and that they must have been sad, terror-struck and morose.⁵

On the contrary, Cram insisted that,

In the Middle Ages religion was a natural and a companionable and a familiar thing, laughter was not averse from it, nor was joking, even sometimes of rather a broad sort, out of the question in relation to what we should consider "serious matters." Hence churches... broke out into delightful gaiety here and there under the hands of high-spirited or waggish workmen, and they, and the religion they expressed, were the better for the wholesome sense of life.⁶

This essay consequently explores Cram's effort to bring a wholesome sense of life to the décor of his Gothic Revival architecture via the use of comedy. He and his sometime architectural partner, Bertram Goodhue (1869-1924), were founding members of the Society of Arts and Crafts in Boston; and thus, they had aligned themselves with some of the most technically skilled artisans of the day to create modern Gothic ornaments that were not tepidly pious, but playful and, at times, playfully irreverent.⁷ Furthermore,

because Cram and Goodhue's Gothic was international, they designed and lectured in both the United States and Canada, their sense of humour transcended the national border. And, through the study of ornaments from various American commissions, I shall contextualize the comedic details in a Canadian church Cram and Goodhue designed: the new St. Mary's Anglican Church (1902-1904) in Walkerville, Ontario (fig. 1).⁸

Long before his 1930 preface, Cram was already celebrating the mirth of medieval artisans. Concerning the construction of a medieval church, he wrote: "All over the exterior the stone masons, not unthinking mechanics at so many dollars a day, wrought out their fancies, their ideals, even their merry humors, through the stubborn but enduring medium of sandstone and marble."⁹ This essay pursues the pun implicit to Cram's plural designation of the humours. Cram was not being redundant when he celebrated the "merry humors" of medieval masons. Rather, he was calling attention to the fact that our sense of the word humour (meaning merriment) comes from the old medical conceptualization of the human body as a vessel for the four humours. For Cram, humour and the humours were interconnected.

Stemming from a Latin designation for wetness, the humours were categorized in ancient, medieval, and early modern medical discourses as fluids in the human body. Accordingly, the four humours were sanguine (blood), phlegmatic (phlegm), choleric (yellow bile or choler), and melancholic (black bile). As such, when Cram wrote his Arthurian epic, *Excalibur*, he demonstrated his comprehension of humoral medical theories. His protagonist, Merlin, lamented the English barons who quibbled over Arthur's royal coronation: "There was

a day when wives gave birth to babes / And nurtured them for heroes: not to rats / That waxed to bloated vermin. Fat with spleen, / Yellow with jealousy, ye barter life, / England and honour for your belching pride."¹⁰ Implicitly, Cram was referring to the yellow bile of the choleric humour, originating in the spleen and causing jealousy and the indigestion of "belching pride." Furthermore, when Arthur accused the controlling Merlin of having an "o'erriding spleen," Merlin retorted: "No wanton humour leads me."¹¹ Likewise, when trying to stimulate the passions of his audience, Cram revelled in the chivalry of Arthurian romance, stating that Arthur and his knights "still stir our blood... still rouse in us answering humours."¹² Finally, concerning his comprehension of the medical humours and Gothic architecture, Cram stated that English Gothic was a "splendid record of the hopes and visions and wholesome humours of a race of active, enthusiastic, healthy Christian men."¹³ The wholesome humours of the Anglo-Gothic body were healthy.

As Cram's references to the spleen, fat with choler, and the rousing humours of the blood indicate, it was also believed that a disproportionate amount of one or more of the humours affected one's temperament. Hence, an excess of blood meant a passionate personality, an excess of phlegm meant an indolent personality, an excess of choler meant an irascible personality, and an excess of black bile meant a melancholic personality. For instance, in William Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, the titular protagonist wore the antic disposition of someone who had gone mad with melancholy, and the king summoned Hamlet's friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who were "so neighboured to [Hamlet's] youth and humour" that they might "draw him on to pleasures."¹⁴ In other words, the king had hoped that



FIG. 2. PULPIT AT CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CHURCH, LOUISVILLE, KY. | CAMERON MACDONELL



FIG. 3. RELIEF CARVINGS OF ANIMALS FROM THE FRIEZE (ABOVE) AND PLINTH (BELOW) OF THE PULPIT AT CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CHURCH, LOUISVILLE, KY. | CRYSTAL MACDONELL

Hamlet's melancholic temperament would be corrected if Hamlet kept company with friends from his prior "humour," from the days before he went mad. Indeed, when Hamlet reunited with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, they shared a bawdy joke that seemed to change Hamlet's mood—albeit momentarily. And so, by that theory of the humours (though not to be limited to Shakespeare), the modern use of the word humour arose—the idea that the "pleasures" of comedy could affect the humour or mood of an individual or, by that same token, that a person's humour or mood could be receptive to particular kinds of comedy.¹⁵ It is the fluidity in the meaning of the word humour that colours the complexion of Cram and Goodhue's Gothic. I propose, therefore, that an investigation of their comedic décor can be organized through Cram's pun on the various "merry humors." If the sanguine humour is passionate, then it is soothed by the silliness of light-hearted comedy. If the phlegmatic humour is indolent, then it is roused by the wit of contemplative

humour. If the choleric humour is irascible, then it is sated with the vitriol of satire. And, if the bilious humour is melancholic, then it dwells on the brink of dark comedy. These humours, however, are not to be treated as rigid categories. I would rather suggest that we humour the humours by treating them as a series of complexions that frequently flow from one to another.

SANGUINE HUMOUR

Of all the different complexions available to modern Gothic architecture, the light-hearted silliness of children, animals, or slapstick physicality is the most prevalent for Cram and Goodhue. One example of purely sanguine silliness occurs among the pulpit carvings for Concordia Lutheran Church (1928-1930) in Louisville, Kentucky (fig. 2). Along the polygonal plinth of the pulpit, the woodcarver (perhaps Johannes Kirchmayer, though as yet unknown) depicted a series of vegetal reliefs that embellish the structural

necessity of the plinth. However, on closer inspection, one such relief (a bounty of oak leaves and acorns) includes a mouse that is found pausing on the branch (fig. 3). Exploiting the rigidity of sculpture, the artisan depicted the mouse frozen in animal caution, staring out at us for all time, waiting to finish the acorn it plucked from the now visibly empty shell. Likewise, at the top of the pulpit, the sculptor carved a continual frieze of vegetation (grapevines, this time) with a bird picking the vineyard clean of a caterpillar. But the sanguineous humour of the frieze develops through a contextual juxtaposition. A snail is slithering farther down the grapevine, and another bird is in pursuit, pondering how to divide the morsel from its intervening shell. Like the mouse that plucked the acorn, the bird's potential meal comes as the fruit of its labour. It is a moral lesson punctuated with the inclusion of another snail, slithering on the lower left-hand corner of the very same branch on which the sculpted mouse divides the acorn from its shell.



FIG. 4. SOUTH DINING HALL, NOTRE DAME UNIVERSITY, SOUTH BEND, IN. | CAMERON MACDONELL

Another example of Cram's sanguineous silliness occurs with a collegiate commission. In 1927, Cram designed a dining hall at Notre Dame University near South Bend, Indiana (fig. 4). One thing that Cram liked about the American educational system was the inclusion and emphasis on "competitive athletics" as a

coordination of training and life; it is in a sense an *école d'application*, and through it the student, for once in a way, tries out his acquired mental equipment and his expanding character—as well as his physical prowess—against the circumstances of active vitality.¹⁶

Competitive athletics push students to coordinate their training with the active vitality of life in the same way that Cram was interested in artisans who could coordinate their technical training with the active vitality of modern life. Cram would, at times, embrace modern subject matter in his decorative flourishes as a means to make his Gothic Revival

architecture relevant to modern viewers.¹⁷ And, in the circumstances of the dining hall at Notre Dame, that subject matter was the active vitality of modern sports, like baseball and American football.

With the hood-mouldings that arch above the dining hall doorways, Cram included decorative label-stops depicting various athletes (fig. 5). But the humour is not strictly limited to the caricatured proportions, costumes, and expressions of the athletic body; the humour is enhanced by the way in which those bodies play across the very structure of the hall (fig. 6).¹⁸ For instance, the most competitive dynamic in the game of baseball is the duel between the pitcher and the batter, the tension of that dynamic extending across the distance from home plate to the pitcher's mound. As such, the distance between the plate and the mound is replicated in the width of the doorway so that the tension of their duel might play across the opening. Thus, the medieval tradition of a hood-mould spanning the doorway, and a



FIG. 5. DOORWAY WITH HOOD-MOULDING, SOUTH DINING HALL, NOTRE DAME UNIVERSITY, SOUTH BEND, IN. | CAMERON MACDONELL

pair of label-stops at the ends of the archway, was modernized through the play of baseball. Likewise, the label-stops on another doorway depict, on one side, the running back of American football, ball in hand, rushing to the end zone, and, on the other, a defensive tackler guarding the goal (fig. 7). The same playful tension is created; only now it is the potential energy of colliding bodies (not the hurling and the batting of a ball) that plays across the gap of the open doorway. Furthermore, the ornamental condition of the label-stop, with the symbolic weight of the hood-mould pressing down upon it, accentuates the golden rule of American football. In a game where tackling is simplified to the rule that the lowest shoulder wins, the crouching bodies of the label-stops stoop to conquer one another from beneath the weight of their decorative purpose.

In addition to being purely sanguineous, Cram and Goodhue offered comedic ornaments that seem, at first blush, to



FIG. 6. BASEBALL LABEL-STOPS, SOUTH DINING HALL, NOTRE DAME UNIVERSITY, SOUTH BEND, IN. | CAMERON MACDONELL.



FIG. 7. FOOTBALL LABEL-STOPS, SOUTH DINING HALL, NOTRE DAME UNIVERSITY, SOUTH BEND, IN. | CAMERON MACDONELL.



FIG. 8. PULPIT AT ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, MT. KISCO, NY. | CAMERON MACDONELL.



FIG. 9. RELIEF CARVINGS OF FOXES FROM THE CORNERS OF THE PULPIT, ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, MT. KISCO, NY. | CRYSTAL MACDONELL.

be light-hearted silliness only to shade into a darker complexion. For instance, in St. Mark's Episcopal Church (begun 1909), Mount Kisco, New York, Bertram Goodhue commissioned Johannes Kirchmayer (the firm's favourite woodcarver) to sculpt the relief imagery of the pulpit (fig. 8). As with

Cram's church in Louisville, Kentucky, the pulpit of St. Mark's flourishes with grapevine reliefs; only here the carvings tendril up the edges of the polygonal structure with foxes clambering up and down the vines (fig. 9). One fox has stopped to taste a vineyard cluster; another has snuggled

into the looping perch of a vine. These are not the fabled foxes of Aesop's sour grapes. These cunning devils can easily sate their hunger.¹⁹ And, if foxes are indeed symbols of demonic cunning, then they are present in the church to shake the faithful from their complacency. Time and



FIG. 10. CHANCEL OF ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, MT. KISCO, NY. | CAMERON MACDONELL.



FIG. 11. SAINT DUNSTAN AND THE DEVIL FROM THE CHANCEL PARAPET, ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, MT. KISCO, NY. | CAMERON MACDONELL.

again, Cram and Goodhue undermined the assumption that a modern church is simply a space of Christian victory over the agents of evil. As Cram once wrote:

Paynim and infidel roll up in surging ranks, break, ebb, and are sucked back into their night, or, as happens now and again, sweep on in victory over fields won from them once by the Knights of the Gothic Quest, and all is to do again. There is neither rest nor pause, neither final defeat nor definite victory.²⁰

And so, the foxes constantly remind the Christian faithful that the fight for one's soul has not come to an end by seeking sanctuary in St. Mark's Episcopal Church. The Devil would deny them the grapes of Eucharistic transubstantiation.

This darker complexion to Cram and Goodhue's sanguineous humour spreads to the chancel of St. Mark's (fig. 10). There is a continuous parapet of Kirchmayer carvings on the woodwork framing the chancel. The parapet is a history of English Christianity, and, in the medieval section of that history, we find the legend of Saint Dunstan pulling the Devil by the nose with a pair of tongs

(fig. 11). This depiction of the Devil might possess a laughable body and ridiculous proboscis; but here, again, satanic evil is not so easily discarded, even in the face of saintly goodness. Saint Dunstan does not simply uproot the Devil with all the tame venerability that Kenneth Clark assigned to the Gothic Revival. Rather, the Devil is so well entrenched in the framing botany of the parapet that Dunstan has to pull the Devil's nose with all his might, losing any sense of saintly composure. He grimaces and contorts his body at the risk of a slapstick tumble. Thus, the physical comedy of the battle is inevitably mixed with thoughts of our own spiritual insecurity. If Saint Dunstan cannot uproot the Devil, what chance have we?

Finally, this slightly irreverent view of Christian sainthood (playful and pensive) continues in the new St. Mary's Anglican Church in Walkerville, Ontario (fig. 12). Because Cram believed that the plan of a Christian church must reflect the rituals to be performed therein, and because he believed that a Christian church is not simply a monolith of Christian sanctuary, he argued that "there is a steady

progression in sanctity from the porch to the altar-stone, and this progression should be expressed in the fabric and the enrichment of the church."²¹ As such, Cram stated that the ritual path from porch to altar-stone is one that moves the faithful (emotionally and liturgically) "from secular things to spiritual, that their souls may be brought into harmony with God."²² In Walkerville, therefore, Cram insisted that Johannes Kirchmayer's choir-stall finials, depicting the four evangelists (fig. 13), were "almost imperatively necessary to the [church's] design."²³ This imperative necessity is reflected in the position of the choir stalls at the mid-point in the progression from nave to sanctuary. Consequently, the two evangelists on the nave side of the choir are less spiritually focused than the other two on the sanctuary side. From secular things to spiritual, the evangelistic finials create a comedic point about spiritual progress and its effect on the young boys in the choir of a Cram and Goodhue church. Saints Matthew and Luke, on the sanctuary side, are, like disciplined chorister, diligent at their writing desks—heads down, pens in hands. Saint John, however, on



FIG. 12. CHANCEL OF ST. MARY'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, WALKERVILLE, ON. | VERN AND KYLE HARVEY.



FIG. 14. ST. MARK'S CHOIR-STALL FINIAL, ST. MARY'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, WALKERVILLE, ON. | VERN AND KYLE HARVEY.



FIG. 13. FOUR EVANGELIST CHOIR-STALL FINIALS, ST. MARY'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, WALKERVILLE, ON. | VERN AND KYLE HARVEY.

the nave side, turns to gaze into the congregation.²⁴ He is like a young chorister whose attention has drifted elsewhere. And Saint Mark, try as he might, cannot help but be distracted by the passing congregants as they progress toward the altar. His head is down, as if focused

on his work, but his eyes look across the choir from beneath his brow (fig. 14). Thus, Cram and Goodhue were willing to poke fun even at the evangelistic saints if it meant articulating the purpose of churches designed to move the faithful toward the sanctity of the altar.

PHLEGMATIC HUMOUR

The essence of phlegmatic humour is wit; and Cram and Goodhue expressed their wit through the visualization of word play, *vis-à-vis* the namesake of their patrons and colleagues. In Duluth, Minnesota,



FIG. 15. ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, DULUTH, MN. | CAMERON MACDONELL.



FIG. 16. APERTURE IN LITURGICALLY NORTHWEST BUTTRESS, ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, DULUTH, MN. | CAMERON MACDONELL.



FIG. 17. LITURGICALLY WESTERN WINDOW, ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, DULUTH, MN. | CAMERON MACDONELL.



FIG. 18. BISHOP'S CHAIR WITH THRONE-LIKE CANOPY, THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF OUR SAVIOUR, MIDDLEBORO, MA. | CAMERON MACDONELL.



FIG. 19. SHIELDS EMBLAZONED WITH THE GRIDIRON, THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF OUR SAVIOUR, MIDDLEBORO, MA. | CAMERON MACDONELL.

for instance, Bertram Goodhue designed St. Paul's Episcopal Church (1910-1915) for the commissioning Hartley family (fig. 15). As such, in the buttressing stonework for the western façade, Goodhue included an

aperture with a stone sword (in honour of Saint Paul) bifurcating the space; and, to either side of the sword, the tracery has been trained into the shape of a heart in honour of the commissioning family

(fig. 16). And the same is true of the great western window of the church, where the predominantly rectilinear tracery gives way, on the left and right, to the shape of the Hartley heart (fig. 17).

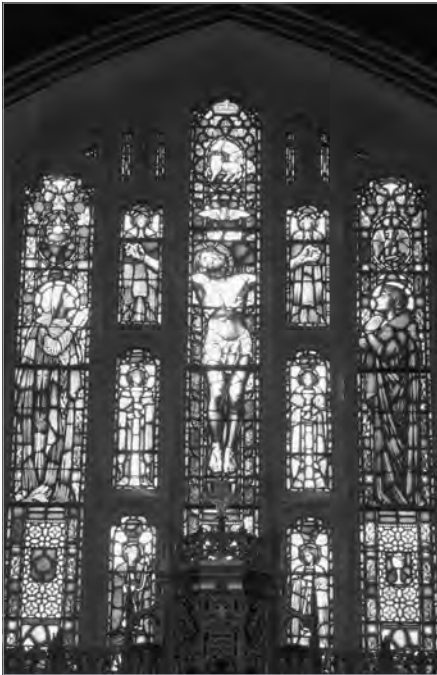


FIG. 20. LITURGICALLY EASTERN CRUCIFIXION WINDOW, ST. MARY'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, WALKERVILLE, ON. | VERN AND KYLE HARVEY.



FIG. 21. "THE SEVEN WORDS" BY FRED HOLLAND DAY. | LOUISE IMOGEN GUINEY COLLECTION, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION.



FIG. 22. COMPARISON OF DAY'S CHRIST (REVERSED AND TILTED); AND HARRY GOODHUE'S CHRIST FROM THE CRUCIFIXION, ST. MARY'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, WALKERVILLE, ON. | LOUISE IMOGEN GUINEY COLLECTION, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION. (LEFT); VERN AND KYLE HARVEY (RIGHT).

Cram and Goodhue would also shade the witticisms of their phlegmatic name-play with a darker sense of humour. In the chancel of The Episcopal Church of Our Saviour (begun 1897) in Middleboro, Massachusetts, Cram and Goodhue designed a platform for the bishop's chair, which, because it included a decorative canopy, took on the implications of a bishop's throne (fig. 18). On that canopy we find not only a bishop's mitre at the centre of the structure but also several smaller mitres on the forward corners, each with a shield emblazoned with an image of the gridiron (fig. 19). This is important because Bishop William Lawrence (1850-1941) was the prelate overseeing the parish at the time of construction, and Saint Lawrence (the bishop's namesake) suffered his martyrdom on a burning gridiron. Yet, as Douglass Shand-Tucci noted, the witticism of the name-play takes a darker turn when we realize that Bishop Lawrence was a Low-Church Episcopalian who would not

have approved the transformation of his bishop's chair into a throne and "would not, in the 1890s, have been caught dead in a mitre."²⁵ Thus, the Anglo-Catholic Cram was putting Bishop Lawrence on the hot seat, as it were, by challenging the bishop's Low-Church purview with a parish church rich in Anglo-Catholic aspirations.

Cram and Goodhue's name-play took an even darker turn in the new St. Mary's Church of Walkerville. The stained-glass window that dominates the church's altar wall is an image of the Crucifixion designed by Bertram Goodhue's younger brother, Harry Goodhue (fig. 20). Harry Goodhue's biographer, Albert Tannler, rightly admitted that Harry's draughtsmanship was "variable," at best; and yet the Walkerville body of Christ is surprisingly detailed.²⁶ This is because Harry Goodhue had precise models to study. In particular, he based the foreshortened

face and strenuous neck of Christ on a contemporary source—the photography of Fred Holland Day. The latter, a pioneer of American art photography, was a close friend of Cram's and the Goodhues' when they all lived in Boston during the 1890s. In 1898, Day created a series of photographic self-portraits in the guise of Christ crucified, which included a septet of headshots entitled "The Seven Words" (fig. 21). Day's depiction of himself gazing heavenward is thus the inspiration for the Walkerville Crucifixion window, having been reversed and tilted on an angle (fig. 22).²⁷ And the joke is that, when the Walkerville Christ gazes heavenward, his eyes lead beyond the dove to the image of a lamb holding the banner of Agnus Dei (fig. 23). Fred Holland Day and his friends, who constantly played with the photographer's cognomen, extended that play into the Walkerville church, where Day, in the guise of Christ, became the Agnus Dei.²⁸



FIG. 23. DETAIL OF CRUCIFIXION, ST. MARY'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, WALKERVILLE, ON. | VERN AND KYLE HARVEY.



FIG. 24. PULPIT (LEFT) AND LECTERN (RIGHT), ALL SAINTS' EPISCOPAL CHURCH, BROOKLINE, MA. | CAMERON MACDONELL.



FIG. 25. ANGRY MONK NEWEL POST ON THE PULPIT STAIRS, ALL SAINTS' EPISCOPAL CHURCH, BROOKLINE, MA. | CAMERON MACDONELL.



FIG. 26. BEFUDDLED MONK NEWEL POST ON THE LECTERN STAIRS, ALL SAINTS' EPISCOPAL CHURCH, BROOKLINE, MA. | CAMERON MACDONELL.

The darkness of this inside joke between Bostonian friends (lost, no doubt, on the Walkerville congregation) emerges when we consider the contextual impetus for Day's photographic series. Day was not

really interested in Christ as a religious figure.²⁹ He was rather taken with the idea of Christ as the creative artist, following on such examples as Albrecht Dürer's self-portrait in the guise of God

Incarnate. He specifically mentioned Dürer in his 1898 defence of "Sacred Art and the Camera."³⁰ More precisely, Day was interested in Christ as a paradigm of artists who die young. His fascination



FIG. 27. BISHOP'S THRONE CANOPY BOSSES (ABOVE) ORGAN CASING BOSSES (BELOW), ST. MARY'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, WALKERVILLE, ON. | VERN AND KYLE HARVEY.



FIG. 28. INTERIOR OF ALL SAINTS' EPISCOPAL CHURCH, ASHMON, MA. | CAMERON MACDONELL.

with the short lives of extraordinary people began with John Keats, dead at twenty-six, and he became a leading collector of Keats memorabilia.³¹ Thus, when Day produced a photograph of himself as Christ entombed, he connected the tragedy of Christ's death with Keats, inscribing a Keats text with the image.³² But, ultimately, Day's choice to photograph himself as Christ in the summer of 1898 was in response to the tragic death of yet another young artist, Aubrey Beardsley, the illustrator of several texts published in America under his direction. Beardsley died in March of 1898, at age twenty-five, providing the immediate catalyst for Day to pursue his sacred photographs in the summer of that year, projecting the tragedy of his own mortality onto Christ via Beardsley and Keats. And Cram and

Goodhue extended that projection into the Walkerville church because, by 1903, they had witnessed the demise of their first artistic circle of friends, the young Bohemians of *fin-de-siècle* Boston. Several were literally dead. As Louise Imogen Guiney, a leader of the Boston Bohemians, lamented in 1901: "May all these broken brothers of ours find peace."³³ And Guiney herself would flee to England that year. Day would soon lose his studio to fire (November 11, 1904) and retire to the coast of Maine. Even Cram and Goodhue's architectural partnership was drifting apart. Having won the commission to redesign the West Point Military Academy in 1903, Goodhue established a second office for the firm in New York City, and eventually Goodhue's office would break from the firm entirely.

The Walkerville church was thus the swansong of their Bohemian youth, articulated through the bitter witticism of Day's appropriation of the sacrificial Agnus Dei.

CHOLERIC HUMOUR

Cram and Goodhue founded their choleric humour on medieval precedence, where Gothic craftsmen satirized "the very common foibles of fellowmen, whether clerical or secular."³⁴ The key, here, is that Cram and Goodhue satirized both the lay and clerical members that congregate in a Cram and Goodhue church. As such, the newel posts that mark the staircases to the pulpit and the lectern of All Saints' Episcopal Church (begun 1894) in Brookline, Massachusetts, have finials that gently mock the use of such



FIG. 29. BRACKET CARVING FROM THE ROOD BEAM, ALL SAINTS' EPISCOPAL CHURCH, ASHMONT, MA. | CAMERON MACDONELL.

oratorical platforms (fig. 24). On the post leading to the Brookline pulpit, Johannes Kirchmayer carved a monk filled with all the fire and brimstone of the most passionate sermons (fig. 25). His brow furrowed, his mouth distorted in anger, the monk shakes his fist at a world that is far from ideal. Yet, apparently, the original plaster model for this finial included an open bottle of wine, the neck of which could be seen rising from the hood of his monastic cowl.³⁵ Cram and Goodhue, knowing well that medieval monks were master vintners and brewers, were willing to undercut the monk's indignation with the suggestion that alcohol, more than virtue, fuelled his outrage. Significantly, the building committee nixed the wine bottle, while the monk's anger, righteous or not, continues to mime the sermons of the pulpit. Likewise, on the opposing lectern, the newel post includes the finial of a monastic lector descending from the reading desk (fig. 26). No changes were made to this figure because the satire is gentler than the pulpit. Here, the lector stands with the sunken eyes and cheeks

of wizened age, a beard flowing from his chin, and the metacarpals stark beneath the thinning skin of his hands. More importantly, while the left hand of the monk holds the book of his concluded lecture, his right hand reaches up to scratch his befuddled brow. The absent-minded lector is as confused by his reading as must, by implication, be the audience of the Brookline church. In the end, Cram may have held the monastic ideal as the highest standard of Christian civilization, but he was also pragmatic enough to realize that not everyone could live up to that standard, including the carven monks of the Brookline newels.³⁶

Cram and Goodhue's satire of the laity and clergy also played with the relationship of height and hierarchy. With the verticality of Gothic architecture, a hierarchy could be organized within a church, where the higher figures perch closer to heaven. Thus, on the projecting canopy of the Walkerville bishop's throne and the looming organ casement of the choir, we find sculpted faces looking down on



FIG. 30. INTERIOR OF THE HOUSE OF HOPE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, SAINT PAUL, MN. | CAMERON MACDONELL.

both the ordained presence of the bishop and the laymen volunteers of the choir (fig. 27). Yet, unlike the Brookline newel posts, where Cram and Goodhue poked fun at specific foibles, in St. Mary's, Walkerville, the joke is that our own foibles are on display to the knowing eyes of the faces looking down from the organ and the throne. And, judging from their expressions of leering laughter, shock, dismay, and stern disapproval, some of our foibles are scandalous, indeed.

Conversely, in All Saints' Episcopal Church (begun 1891) in Ashmont, Massachusetts, Cram and Goodhue undercut the hierarchical expectations of church architecture with a satiric jab at Boston snobbery. A key feature of the Ashmont church, dividing the lay and clerical sides of the building, is a massive rood beam looming over the chancel steps (fig. 28). Upon closer inspection, though, the brackets for the rood beam present pairs of laymen (carved by Kirchmayer) bearing witness to the sculpted Crucifixion (fig. 29). These haughty churchmen turn up their shrill



FIG. 31. MARTYRDOM OF SAINT MATTHEW CORBEL, THE HOUSE OF HOPE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, SAINT PAUL, MN. | CAMERON MACDONELL



FIG. 32. PULPIT CANOPY AT ALL SAINTS' EPISCOPAL CHURCH, BROOKLINE, MA. | CAMERON MACDONELL

and pointed noses at the rest of us on the ground, below, only so that we might ridicule them in the same way that Cram and Goodhue ridiculed the Low-Church argument they heard, time and again, in Boston—namely the “custom of refusing to consider any [church] plan that shows a single seat behind a column,” as if blocking one’s view of the sanctuary was a denial of communion.³⁷ Devotion, for Cram and Goodhue, was not measured in the proximity of one’s pew to the liturgy, a point that is lost on the gawking laymen of the brackets who pride themselves on being at the forefront of the congregation.

MELANCHOLIC HUMOUR

Though Cram and Goodhue usually let their dark comedy emerge from beneath the symptoms of another humour, they did occasionally bring the darkness to the forefront. One aspect of their dark humour derived from the grim conditions of violence. In The House of Hope Presbyterian Church (begun 1912) in Saint

Paul, Minnesota, Cram included carvings of the Apostles on corbels that catch the bracing weight of the roof (fig. 30). One such apostolic corbel is the depiction of Saint Matthew, bent low in the final prayer of his mortal life, the angel (his protome) praying by his side (fig. 31). Saint Matthew, having departed from the Feast of Pentecost and having written his gospel, was martyred in Ethiopia at the hands of an axe-man. Thus, we see the killer primed to murder a saint, turning to gaze at us with a smug grin on his face, gleefully defiant of Christian morality. And, because his act of “hagiocide” occurs on an elevated corbel, far above our heads, his smugness compounds with our inability to reach out and stop him. This is a dark humour so bilious that the comedy is lost, perhaps, on all save the murderer himself.

More often, though, Cram and Goodhue’s sense of dark comedy derived from the morbid admission of demons in their liturgical spaces. If Cram and Goodhue used foxes to create a sanguine sense of

humour that turned dark with an understanding of vulpine Satanism, then their purely melancholic sense of humour was the presentation of the demonic without metaphorical guises. Cram, for instance, was an avid reader of Dante Alighieri, whose *Divine Comedy* culminated in a vision of heaven in the form of a blossoming rose, as the saintly souls of the redeemed were revealed to Dante and his readers, petal upon petal.³⁸ As such, the canopy overhanging the pulpit in All Saints’, Brookline, has blossoming roses suspended between the canopy cusps (fig. 32). These roses, reminding us of the multitudes of saints that are forever thriving in Dante’s vision, are to inspire poetry from the sermons of the pulpit, as preacher after preacher glance heavenward to the canopy and its hanging blossoms. Yet, a clutch of therianthrope demons have literally come out of the woodwork, reaching out to block the preacher’s divine inspiration and, by extension, the preacher’s ability to inspire faith among the congregated laity.

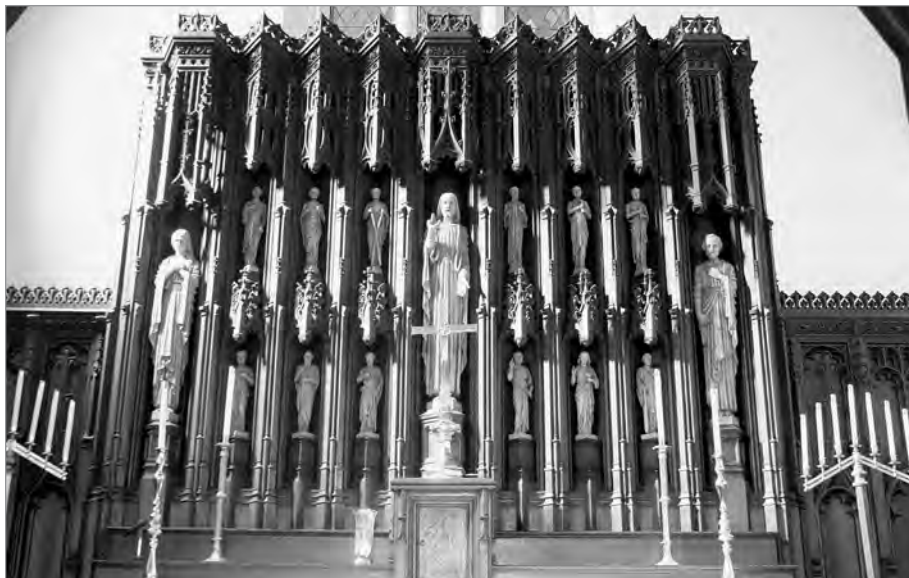


FIG. 33. REREDOS SCREEN AT THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF OUR SAVIOUR, MIDDLEBORO, MA. | CAMERON MACDONELL.

A similar example of demonic dark comedy is found in *The Episcopal Church of Our Saviour* in Middleboro, Massachusetts, where Cram and Goodhue already created a phlegmatic-*cum*-melancholic joke at the expense of Bishop Lawrence and his chair sizzling with the gridirons of Catholic hagiography. Nevertheless, that particular joke becomes even darker when we turn to the reredos screen of the Middleboro chancel, with the bishop's throne flanking to the left (fig. 33). The front of the reredos, directed at the congregated mass, is an encyclopaedic glory of Christian sainthood, ever affirming the Christian faithful. But, on the left side of the reredos, facing the bishop's throne, we find a single demonic presence grinning wickedly at the bishop (fig. 34). As with the demons reaching through the Brookline canopy, this grinning fiend seeks to disrupt the bishop's communion with God, reminding the prelate that mortal faith is in constant conflict with the forces of evil.

Finally, there are decorative flourishes in Cram and Goodhue's Canadian and American churches that are, at first glance, un-amusing bits of dark subject matter that suddenly become funny when discovered for their sanguine silliness. For instance, there is, on the exterior of the new *St. Mary's*, Walkerville, a single gargoyle projecting from the shedding edge of the aisle roof (fig. 35). As with medieval gargoyles, this monstrosity, with wild eyes, gaping mouth, and gruesome teeth, is a reminder of the reality of evil. And yet, unlike medieval gargoyles, where water typically sheds through an open orifice in the monster's body, in Walkerville the gargoyle becomes ridiculous as it gorges itself on the downspout of a modern eaves-trough. It has bitten off more than it can chew. Likewise, in *Christ Episcopal Church* (begun 1924) in Cranbrook, Michigan, the floors are paved with Pewabic tiles, the local work of Detroit's Mary Chase Stratton. Specifically, on the steps leading to Cranbrook's high-altar sanctuary, we find the tile of a demon, front and



FIG. 34. DEMONIC GROTESQUE ON THE REREDOS SCREEN, THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF OUR SAVIOUR, MIDDLEBORO, MA. | CAMERON MACDONELL.

centre (fig. 36). Only here, because the demon has been relegated to a tile on the steps to the altar, satanic power is to be trampled in the footfall of generation after generation of Cranbrook Christians, stomping their demonic nemesis every time they make their way to commune with God.

DIAGNOSIS

As is perhaps clearest in their use of demonic dark comedy, Cram and Goodhue were interested in humouring the humours precisely because they felt that the modern world was sick with sin. Cram was particularly adamant on this point:

We do not possess a genuine, vital civilization... There have always been dazzling personalities that flashed out of the surrounding gloom like the writing on the wall at the great king's feast; but they are not manifestations of healthy art... The sanest, most wholesome art is that which is the heritage of all the people, the natural language through which they express their joy of life...³⁹



FIG. 35. GARGOYLE AT ST. MARY'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, WALKERVILLE, ON. | VERN AND KYLE HARVEY.

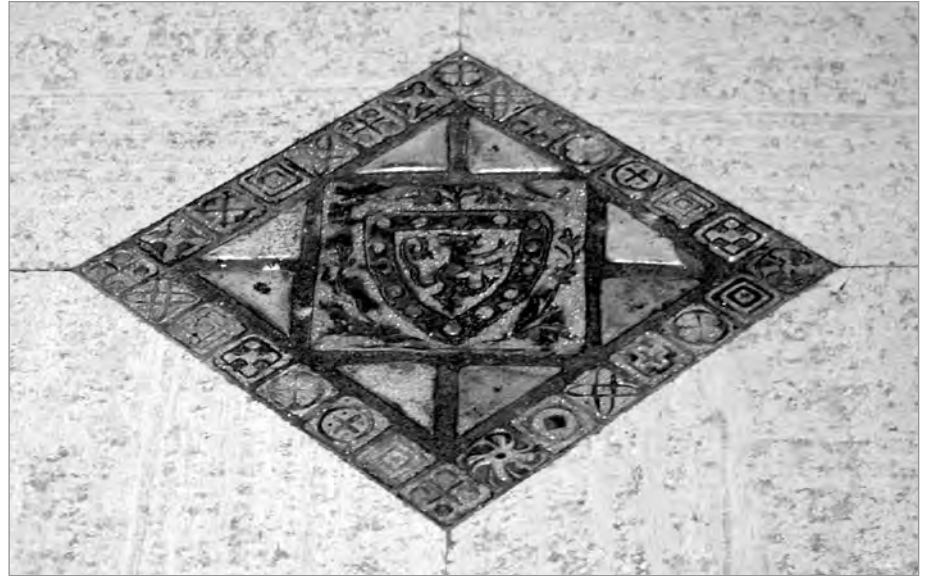


FIG. 36. DEMON TILE AT CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, CRANBROOK, MI. | CAMERON MACDONELL.

With Cram's reference to the "joy of life," it is clear that his sense of wholesomeness was based in John Ruskin's theory of joyous labour. More to the point, Ruskin argued that humour and playfulness were essential to that joyousness: "for a healthy manner of play is necessary in order to a healthy manner of work."⁴⁰ But, insofar as architecture is concerned, Ruskin's theory of joyous labour emerged from the physicality of working with the materials of construction. This is why, whenever Cram spoke of the wholesome art of medieval masons as an expression of their "merry humors," he was referring to a healthy civilization in which the architect, *per se*, did not exist:

We ought to be able to build a church without the intervention of an architect, but we can't. He is a product of the new condition of life wherein art is an exotic, no longer inalienable right of the people; and, so long as these conditions continue, he is a necessary evil. No single architect can build as perfectly as the old priests and abbots and stone masons; but he can build better than

anyone else in this day and generation, and so he must be accepted and his authority recognized.⁴¹

Cram considered himself to be a necessary evil of the modern world—necessary inasmuch as his "authority" equipped him to build better churches than most architects of his day and generation, but evil inasmuch as his day and generation were symptomatic of an unhealthy civilization in which the people did not build their own churches. Yet, even though Cram was "inclined to think that the professional architect or artist of any kind is a sign of disease in the body politic," he also believed that the professional architect was not the disease in itself: "indeed he may be, in fact is, a saving prophylactic."⁴² By nurturing creative relationships with architectural artisans, especially through the Society of Arts and Crafts in Boston, Cram and Goodhue could recuperate at least one aspect of the wholesome sense of life found in medieval architecture—a sense of humour. And because one's sense of humour was, for

Cram, incorporated with the humoral health of one's body (not to mention the body politic), he and Bertram Goodhue believed that the use of comedy helped to heal the sickness of the modern world. Laughter, for them, may not have been the best medicine (beauty was best), but it was medicine, indeed.

NOTES

1. Clark, Kenneth, 1928, *The Gothic Revival: An Essay in the History of Taste*, London, Constable, p. 286.
2. *Id.* : 287.
3. *Ibid.*
4. After all, Augustus Welby Pugin condemned images of "indecent buffoonery" that he saw in medieval churches because "these monstrous and ludicrous representations that are found in our great churches are derived from a most objectionable source, a Pagan custom, revived among Christians, and only among Christians, through a licentious and disobedient spirit. They should be indeed rather regarded as the evidence of a degraded taste, than selected for our present imitation." (See Pugin, A.W.N., 1846 [2nd ed. rev.], *Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament and*

- Costume, Complied from Ancient Authorities and Examples*, London, Henry Bohn, p. 128.) Nevertheless, Pugin further distinguished between “those *burlesque* figures” and other symbolic representations of vice, which, through the ridiculousness of their folly, served a moral purpose for the Christian faithful. (*Id.* : 129; [emphasis original].) It was Pugin’s need for a moral undercurrent that made him such a brilliant satirist, as evident in the comedic vitriol of his illustrated *Contrasts* (1836; 1841). Thus, it was not that Pugin’s art lacked a sense of humour, just a sense of humour that Kenneth Clark could appreciably see in his architecture.
5. Cram, Ralph Adams, 1930, “Introduction,” in Lester Burbank Bridgman, *Gargoyles, Chimères and the Grotesque in French Gothic Sculpture*, New York, Architectural Book Publishing Co., p. vii.
 6. *Id.* : viii.
 7. Anecdotal evidence of Cram’s slight irreverence can be found in a prank he pulled at the consecration service of a church he designed. The congregation of that church was decidedly Low-Episcopalian, and Cram, an Anglo-Catholic, “secreted incense into the hot-air furnace” to give the staunchly Protestant congregation a whiff of what a High-Church service was like in a church of his design. (See Shand-Tucci, Douglass, 1995, *Boston Bohemia, 1881-1900, Ralph Adams Cram: Life and Architecture*, vol. 1, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, p. 270.)
 8. For further details on the Walkerville church, see Macdonell, Cameron, 2006, “‘If You Want To, You Can Cure Me’: Duplicity and the Edwardian Patron,” *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada*, vol. 31, no. 2, p. 23-36.
 9. Cram, Ralph Adams, 1901, *Church Building: A Study of the Principles of Architecture in Their Relation to the Church*, Boston, Small, Maynard and Co., p. 34.
 10. Cram, Ralph Adams, 1908, *Excalibur: An Arthurian Drama*, Boston, R.G. Badger, p. 28.
 11. *Id.* : 81.
 12. Cram, Ralph Adams, 1922, *Towards the Great Peace*, Boston, Marshall Jones, p. 81.
 13. Cram, Ralph Adams, 1907, *The Gothic Quest*, New York, Baker and Taylor, p. 72.
 14. Shakespeare, William, 1997, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* (c.1600), in Stephen Greenblatt (gen. ed.), *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*, New York, W.W. Norton and Co., p. 1691.
 15. For the latter point, see, for instance, Johnson, Ben, 1616, *Every Man in His Humour: A Comedy* (1598), London, William Stansby.
 16. Cram, *Towards the Great Peace*, *op. cit.* : 167 [emphasis original].
 17. For instance, when Cram created a list of his chivalric heroes, in addition to the fictional Galahad and actual Chevalier Bayard of the Middle Ages, he included George Washington as a modern representative (*id.* : 175). Thus, when Cram designed St. George’s Chapel (begun 1916) at the Mercersburg Academy of Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, he included not only a window depicting the Arthurian Grail Quest to inspire the academy’s young men to aspire to the chivalric ideal, but also a two-light window with the Chevalier Bayard on the right and George Washington on the left, reminding the students that the chivalric ideal did not end with the Middle Ages.
 18. Inasmuch as the purpose of a hood-moulding is to shed rainwater away from the doors beneath, the label-stops would drip with rain. As such, the absurdly long brim of the batter’s baseball cap plays with the hood-moulding’s purpose: the brim sheds the rainwater away from the batter’s watchful eyes.
 19. Concerning the evil of foxes, Cram, the Jacobite-monarchist, wrote a poem to commemorate the royal battle-standard of King Charles I, raised in Nottingham on August 22, 1642, starting the English Civil War. The poem is called “Nottingham Hunting,” and Cram described the parliamentary opposition to the king thusly: “Count the rascals as they scamper! If there’s one, there’s one-and-twenty; / There’s the gray old fox Noll Cromwell, crafty Pym, and coward Byng, / Hampden, Hollis, Vane, and Essex—Lord! there’s sport enough in plenty; / ‘T is a gallant day for hunting in the name of Charles the King.” (Cram, Ralph Adams, 1895, “Nottingham Hunting,” *The Century*, vol. 27, p. 557.) The rebellious forces of Cromwell and the other parliamentary foxes were evils of a modern world that broke Catholic faith with God and King. Furthermore, in the aftermath of World War I, Cram would go on to explain the evil of Cromwell’s rebellion in the apocalyptic terms of a modern world giving birth to the Antichrist. Cromwell helped prepare the modern world “for its [the Antichrist’s] nativity, and when, on the first of August, 1914, a group of ‘supermen’ in Berlin acted as surgeons and midwife, it came to its birth, after long gestation... In the first months of Apocalyptic revelation... it became dismally evident that modern civilization was doomed.” (Cram, Ralph Adams, 1919, *The Sins of the Father*, Boston, Marshall Jones, p. 2-3.) As Cram’s mocking reference to Germanic supermen makes clear, he also believed that World War I began under the influence of Friedrich Nietzsche’s “antichrist philosophy.” (Cram, Ralph Adams, 1915, *The Heart of Europe*, New York, Scribners, p. 5.) Thus, for Cram, the nativity of the Great War, which the “old fox,” Cromwell, helped in its gestation, was indeed the birth of the Antichrist.
 20. Cram, *The Gothic Quest*, *op. cit.* : 9.
 21. Cram, *Church Building: A Study of the Principles of Architecture*, *op. cit.* : 89. Concerning the importance of liturgy, Cram insisted that Catholic ritual was an art form that demanded “every adjunct of perfect beauty that can be brought to its environment.” (Cram, *The Gothic Quest*, *op. cit.* : 292.) Likewise, concerning the importance of a church’s plan to facilitate the art of liturgy, Cram advised: “first let us consider the plan, for all hangs on this: if the plan is not right, and if the whole structure does not follow inevitably from it, then the whole thing is wrong.” (Cram, Ralph Adams, 1899, “Good and Bad Modern Gothic,” *Architectural Review*, vol. 6, p. 115.)
 22. Cram, *Church Building: A Study of the Principles of Architecture*, *op. cit.* : 8.
 23. Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson, Boston, MA, to the Messrs. Walker, Walkerville, ON, June 10, 1903, TSL, Leddy Library, the University of Windsor, Ontario: Acc. #07-011, File #278 (“Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson Correspondence”), Box #24.
 24. Granted, one might argue that John is caught in the rapture of revelatory vision, instead, and thus still quite focused on the Lord’s work.
 25. Shand-Tucci, 1995 : 270. Shand-Tucci consequently argued that such a combination of wit and dark comedy was demonstrative of camp humour and thus the distinctly “Gay Gothic” of Cram and Goodhue’s supposed homosexuality. Yet, wit and dark humour are not the privileged combination of homosexual campiness. One need only look to Augustus Welby Pugin’s witty and grim contrast of the poor in medieval and modern England (where the modern poor are boxed up and sent for dissection in the anatomy theatres) to realize that the Anglo-Gothic Revival made use of dark witticisms regardless of sexual orientation; and one would be hard pressed to “out” Pugin.
 26. Tannler, Albert, 2004, “Harry Eldredge Goodhue: Pioneer of American Stained Glass,”

- Stained Glass Quarterly* [http://public.sqaonline.com/main_pages/sgq/harrygoodhue.html], last accessed June 10, 2005.
27. The reversal process is easy enough to follow. Harry Goodhue placed a print of Day's crucified Christ on an angle under the glass, sketching the image on one side, and then turning it over to paint the reversed image with the vitreous stains for the final window.
 28. As an example of that name-play in Boston, Fred Holland Day kept a plaque over his door reading "This is the Day." (See Harvinga, Anne E., 2000, "Setting the Time of Day in Boston", in Pam Roberts, Edwin Becker, Verna Posever Curtis, Anne E. Harvinga (eds.), *F. Holland Day*, Zwolle, Waanders, p. 31.) Likewise, his dearest friend, Louise Imogen Guiney, called Day "Sonney" in her letters to him. (See Jussim, Estelle, 1981, *Slave to Beauty: The Eccentric Life and Controversial Career of F. Holland Day*, Boston, David Godine, p. 35.) Day was a member (along with Cram, Bertram Goodhue, and possibly Harry Goodhue) of an occult arts society in Boston called the Visionists, where his club name was the Latinization of his cognomen into "Dies" (*id.* : 47).
 29. When Day researched visual imagery of the Crucifixion, he turned to Guiney, a Roman Catholic, for guidance. Guiney would, at times, argue with Day about his appropriation of religious imagery, using Cram, in fact, to support her Catholic purview: "Seest thou the parable? Cram sees it admirably." (Parrish, Stephen Maxfield, 1987, *Currents of the Nineties in Boston and London*, New York, Garland Publishing, p. 43.)
 30. See Curtis, Verna Posever, and Jane van Nimmen (eds.), 1995, *F. Holland Day: Select Texts and Bibliography*, New York, G.K. Hall and Co., p. 62.
 31. See especially Rollins, Hyder Edward, and Stephen Maxfield Parrish, 1951, *Keats and the Bostonians*, New York, Russell and Russell.
 32. Fred Holland Day was an American publisher of Oscar Wilde, and Wilde specifically connected the young deaths of Keats and Christ in a sonnet. (See Parrish, 1987 : 327.) Wilde was also interested in Christ as an artistic paradigm, and a vehicle for self-portraiture. (See especially Ellmann, Richard, 1988, *Oscar Wilde*, New York, Knopf, p. 328, 358-359, and 515.) Thus, it has been suggested that Oscar Wilde influenced Day's decision to create self-portraiture in the guise of Christ. (Crump, James, 1995, *Suffering the Ideal: Fred Holland Day*, Santa Fe, NM, Twin Palms Publishers, p. 17-18.)
 33. Louise Imogen Guiney to Fred Holland Day, February 15, 1901, as quoted in Parrish, 1987 : 332.
 34. Cram, "Introduction," *op. cit.* : viii.
 35. See Montross, Richard Thomas, 2007, *A Tour of All Saints Parish, Brookline, Massachusetts*, Boston, Montross Graphics, p. 11.
 36. See Cram, Ralph Adams, 1905, *The Ruined Abbeys of Great Britain*, New York, James Potts, p. 5.
 37. Cram, *Church Building: A Study of the Principles of Architecture*, *op. cit.* : 10.
 38. In 1893, for instance, Cram wrote a sonnet dedicated to "Dante in Exile," *New England Magazine*, vol. 8, p. 525.
 39. Cram, *Church Building: A Study of the Principles of Architecture*, *op. cit.* : 1.
 40. Ruskin, John, 1885, *The Stones of Venice*, vol. 3, New York, John B. Alden, p. 127. Incidentally, for Ruskin, the manifestation of "healthy" playfulness came in the "noble" forms of Gothic grotesques, which perfectly balanced the extremities of terror and ludicrousness (*id.* : 126); hence, the terrifying gargoyle at Walkerville made ludicrous in its service to the drainage of the church.
 41. Cram, *Church Building: A Study of the Principles of Architecture*, *op. cit.* : 48-49.
 42. Cram, Ralph Adams, 1936, *My Life in Architecture*, Boston, Little, Brown and Co., p. 290.