

Ausstellungen

THE GOLDEN AGE OF ANGLO-SAXON ART, 966—1066

Exhibition. London, British Library, 9 november 1985 to 10 march 1985.

(with seven illustrations)

This is the first exhibition to be devoted solely to English art of the 10th and 11th centuries, and it was an excellent idea on the part of the late D. H. Turner to focus it on the millenary of the death of Bishop Ethelwold of Winchester (963—84). Two important manuscripts are connected with him, the New Minster Charter made on the occasion of King Edgar's gifts to the community newly reformed at Winchester in 966 (no. 26), and the Benedictinal made for Ethelwold's own use as its colophon tells us (no. 37). There are records of other gifts to Winchester and to Abingdon which do not survive, and also suggestions that the bishop was himself an artist. Even if the latter are to be discounted, following C. R. Dodwell's arguments, Ethelwold's interest in art is undoubted and his role in the Benedictine monastic reform of the period which was one of the essential preconditions of the monastic art production of the succeeding century, has been increasingly emphasized in recent scholarship. Also crucial is the impetus provided by the collaboration of church and state at this period, as Simon Keynes emphasizes in his excellent historical introduction to the catalogue. The New Minster Charter makes this visible (*Catalogue*, pl. IV) in its portrait of the King flanked by the patrons of the Abbey, the Virgin and St. Peter, and holding up the record of his gifts to God in heaven above. There were close personal relations between the King and the three leading monastic reformers, Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury, Ethelwold himself and Oswald, Bishop of Worcester. This collaboration between King and church to their mutual advantage was established even earlier by Alfred and his grandson, Athelstan, and it is no accident that we have surviving representation of the latter as well as of Edgar and later of Cnut, each shown as donor to the Church. Moreover, in two 11th-century copies of the *Regularis Concordia*, the text enshrining the principles of the Reform, Edgar is shown sitting flanked by Dunstan and Ethelwold (*Abb. 2*). I have no doubt that this representation goes back to a contemporary copy of the *Regularis Concordia*. Clearer visual manifestoes than these of church/state relations cannot be imagined (*Catalogue*, pl. p. 49).

Anglo-Saxon art production of this period is characterised, perhaps, by two features above all. The first is technical virtuosity and an ability to experiment with a wide variety of media and techniques. As Professor Dodwell's recent study of the literary sources demonstrates, these were aspects well understood by contemporaries. The Anglo-Saxons themselves evolved a sophisticated art literature to describe the aesthetic qualities they most admired. This aspect was amply demonstrated by the objects in the exhibition, in the combination of ivory, goldwork and enamel, for example in the Victoria and Albert Museum Crucifix (no. 118) which was perhaps the single most stunning object in the whole show; or

in a whole sequence of manuscripts employing outline drawing in ink or in colours and often combining these techniques with colour wash or full colour and gilding of extraordinary splendour. An example of the latter was the Eadui Gospels from Hannover (no. 56).

The second feature was a willingness to experiment with pictorial representation. The two features could be seen conjoined, in fact, in a series of remarkable frontispiece drawings with unusual subject matter, such as the Dunstan at the feet of Christ (no. 31), the Philosophy (no. 33), or the Justus Judex (no. 63). It was observed long ago by Adolph Goldschmidt in a famous paper (*Medieval Studies in memory of A. Kingsley Porter*, 1939, not included in the catalogue bibliography) that English artists were brilliant at depicting the grotesque and the demonic. They were also extraordinarily inventive of new iconographies, well-known examples being the horned Moses, the so-called disappearing Christ in the Ascension, or their images of the Trinity. This aspect of Anglo-Saxon art was not made so visible in the exhibition either in the images chosen for display or in the labels, nor was it sufficiently stressed in the catalogue. Particularly if one contrasts the major artistic achievements of the preceding Insular period which are in mainly non-figurative art, the Reform period becomes striking in its stress on reinstating the pictorial image. It must have been a conscious desire and purpose on the part of the reformers to use art to serve devotional and ideological purposes. An example would be the many and varied representations of the Crucified Christ, some stressing Christ's triumph as King, others the pathos of his suffering as Man. In many cases the sources of these images are Carolingian, and this is very understandable in the context of the emulation of Carolingian political and religious organization. In other cases it is not clear if artists had even earlier mediterranean models still preserved in their libraries and treasuries. And in other cases artists must have themselves been innovative, as recent scholarship has been more willing to recognize. How artists borrowed, combined and invented in their illustrative cycles to manuscripts such as the Aelfric Hexateuch, the Junius Caedmon or the Benedictional of St. Ethelwold is still a subject of controversy and exploration. Only occasionally did we see a resurgence of Insular aesthetic aims, for example in a series of buckles (nos. 80—1). This raises the question of whether it was rather in secular art of which so few examples relatively survive, that the earlier native aesthetic lived on.

Though the organizers must certainly be warmly congratulated on a magnificent and impressive show, it was not the fully comprehensive exhibition which might have been hoped for in an ideal world. The catalogue contains two hundred and seventy-five items of which, however, nos. 173—260 are coins. Of the remaining one hundred and ninety-seven items ninety-nine are outside loans of which twenty-one are from Europe and the United States and seventy-eight from other collections in the United Kingdom. The other ninety-eight items come from the British Museum and the British Library. Architecture was represented by photographs in the exhibition and an authoritative short essay in the catalogue by Richard Gem.

A few pieces of sculpture were exhibited, including fragments from the Reculver Cross, and a plaster cast was shown of one of the Bradford-on-Avon angels. The cross-shaft from East Stour (no. 23) has leaf forms of the kind often described as Byzantine blossoms, which surely suggest a 12th-century date rather than 10th century. Naturally, however, the main bulk of the exhibits were manuscripts and small scale objects in metalwork or ivory. A welcome addition was a number of impressive charters and some books chosen to illustrate particular texts and the different types of script used by Anglo-Saxon scribes. This section entitled "Literature, learning and documentary sources" evoked considerable interest amongst the visitors to the exhibition.

Of absentees from the exhibition the Durham stole and maniple given to St. Cuthbert by King Athelstan was one serious gap. A detail was shown in a not very good coloured blown-up photograph. Neither of the two Gospels given to Weingarten by Judith of Flanders and now in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, was included. This was doubly to be regretted in view of their contemporary metal bindings which are a unique survival even if they were made in Flanders rather than in England, as has been argued. But perhaps that was why they were not available for loan. The Psalter from Bury St. Edmunds now in the Vatican was also missing. Again this is perhaps understandable, but I do not see why the organizers were unable to borrow the important Rhabanus Maurus from Trinity College, Cambridge, or the Psalter, Junius 27, from the Bodleian Library. Both of these are crucial evidence for the developments of the reign of Athelstan, which form a prelude to the Reform period, and the former shows clearly the debts to the Continent. From that point of view it would also have been good to show a Breton manuscript of which there were clearly a number in England at an early date. The Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels now in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (Ms. 45—1980), was the obvious candidate, whether it is Breton or, as Carl Nordenfalk has argued, from Fleury. It was also a pity that the two Damme leaves recently acquired by the J. Paul Getty Museum, were not shown. On the other hand the exhibition did include a number of newly discovered or rarely seen objects and one particularly notable exhibit was the great portable Reliquary Cross from Brussels Cathedral (no. 75). The large case with the sequence of Gospels, including those from Hannover and Copenhagen, was magnificent. And the Bibliothèque Municipale at Rouen generously lent both the Pontifical of Archbishop Robert and the Sacramentary of Robert of Jumièges, the two nearest rivals to the Benedictional of St. Ethelwold in splendour among liturgical manuscripts (nos. 40, 50).

The catalogue of the exhibition, in addition to the contributions by Keynes and Gem already mentioned, contains six essays by D. H. Turner, Janet Backhouse, Marion Archibald and Leslie Webster. These served to introduce the three main sections into which the exhibition was divided: first "The Legacy of Alfred", second "The Golden Age" and third, "After the Conquest". All the objects are illustrated and there are thirty-two colour plates. Some of these are, however, disastrous. The Victoria and Albert Cross already referred to is reproduced on an

awful pink background which completely deadens the gold. A number of the plates of manuscripts are either much too red, for example the College of Arms leaf or the Eadui Gospels, or washed out, for example the Grimbold Gospels. The Alfred Jewel is shown with a shadow which obliterates the top of the face. Whether these plates are the result of poor printing, poor supervision or poor colour transparencies, they are regrettable. Of course at £7.50 the catalogue is a bargain, but it must be said that it has other deficiencies, and especially when it is compared to some recent exhibition catalogues, particularly those produced in Germany and the United States.

First of all there is a considerable discrepancy between the entries on manuscripts and those on ivories and precious metal objects. The former are much shorter and sometimes quite perfunctory. Basic descriptive factual information is omitted, so that, for example, the principle of "word illustration" in the Harley 603 Psalter is not explained and can hardly have been understood by visitors. The heretic Arius in the Trinity miniature in the Aelfwine prayers (no. 61) is not mentioned, so that the very unusual representation is not linked to the representation of him in the Eadui Gospels (no. 56, *Abb. 4, 5*). Why were English artists so aware of him? It is probably the obverse, as it were, of their interest in representing the Trinity, for in the Eadui Gospels Arius holds a scroll whose words: "Tempus erat quando non erat" deny Christ's coeternity.

Another example of the brevity of the entries is the omission of any mention of the Cotton fire in relation to the Tiberius Psalter (no. 66). Incidentally surely it is time that such an important manuscript received some conservation treatment and had the totally unsuitable paper mounting with its red lines as if these were some 18th-century mounted drawings, removed.

It was also a bad decision in the manuscript section to rely so totally on Dr. Temple's book and not to give a selective bibliography of crucial earlier articles on particular manuscripts. The effect of this is that the combined bibliography at the end of the catalogue contains even quite old and I would have thought peripheral articles on ivories, for example P. Nelson in *Connoisseur*, 1909, but not a single entry for Meyer Schapiro! Kantorowitz's famous study of the Winchester Quinity is likewise not there. Only three of Francis Wormald's papers are included, though his contribution is fundamental to the present study of the manuscripts. Homburger's book of 1912, which introduced the problematic concept of the Winchester School, is included but his name is misspelled. If Saxl's article on the Ruthwell and Bewcastle Crosses had been included the *Christus super aspidem* in Bodl. Douce 296 (no. 68) would not have been described as the earliest occurrence in a Psalter. It is found, of course, in both the Utrecht and the Stuttgart Psalters.

Even if the decision to rely on Temple for earlier literature was justified, one might at least have expected up-to-date citations of more recent literature since 1976, not a difficult task considering the bibliographies provided by *Anglo-Saxon England*. But articles on the Dunstan Classbook by John Higgitt in *Art History*, 2 (1979), and by Helmut Gneuss in *Anglia*, 96 (1978), on the Sherborne Pontifical

by Jane Rosenthal in *Art Bulletin*, 63 (1981), on the Junius Caedmon by Herbert Broderick in *Scriptorium*, 37 (1983) and on Athelstan's manuscripts by Michael Wood in *Studies for Michael Wallace-Hadrill*, 1983, are all omitted, to name only some of the more important recent contributions. The catalogue is therefore very deficient even as a "state of the question" publication as far as the manuscripts are concerned and makes itself comparatively few new contributions. Janet Backhouse's new article on the Harley 603 Psalter is a noteworthy exception to these strictures (*British Library Journal*, 10 [1984] 97 ss.).

The entries by members of the staff of Medieval and Later Antiquities at the British Museum, especially Leslie Webster, are much longer and fuller, and include some very good entries, for example that on the Victoria and Albert Cross (no. 118). Here there is a different problem, since so many of these entries propose new datings or interpretations. This opens up the discussion and is certainly to be welcomed. If one were to criticize, I think it would be because not all the implications seem always fully worked out and a wider context taken into account. For instance the Morgan Library ivory (no. 21) is here dated to the second quarter of the 10th century, following a lead of Hanns Swarzenski. But Webster does not face the difficulty of dating such a drapery style with its agitated Ada school features so early. Comparison is made justifiably with the Bodleian Junius Psalter, whose omission I earlier lamented, but of course a stylistic dating has to take the most up-to-date features as its criterion. The type of rich acanthus used occurs in many of the ivories and one problem seems to be whether there was not some sort of historicising revival in the 11th century of the earlier 10th century style. This at least seems to be the explanation of the initials in the Junius Caedmon, and may also be the case in the Trinity Gospels, so one wonders if the same could not have happened in the ivories. Altogether the ivory datings seem to me still inconsistent and in need of further detailed work. As another example of my misgivings, I would instance the curved mount (no. 19) placed in the first case and dated c. 900. Unlike all the other objects around it this has no observable Insular features and even if the former dating in the late 11th century has to be abandoned, the manuscript parallels adduced for a dating so early do not seem to me convincing.

There have been no significant exhibitions solely of English medieval art for some fifty years until the English Romanesque exhibition of 1984 at the Hayward Gallery, which this exhibition followed almost immediately after. That the two exhibitions came in reverse chronological order was a pity, of course, but has to be accepted. There was also an overlap between them, in that objects appeared in both exhibitions being assigned different dates by different scholars. This has been commented on a good deal by other reviewers, but seems to me justifiable in so far as one of the benefits of such exhibitions is to allow objects to be seen in context so as, hopefully, to help resolve such conflicts of opinion. The overlap, however, which was caused by the present exhibition including a Post-Conquest section seems to me much more open to criticism. If it was thought desirable to go over again the ground of the survival of Anglo-Saxon styles after the Conquest, then

rather than showing, for example, once again a manuscript like the Wadham Gospels which is not of very great importance either historically or artistically, at least some new material might have been included. For example, the Alexander texts in Royal 13. A. I of apparently the later 11th century are prefaced by a very interesting coloured outline drawing in Anglo-Saxon style which was included by Wormald in his book on Anglo-Saxon drawings, but which is little known and whose subject matter needs further elucidation (*Abb. 3*).

However, I think a more interesting option would have been to attempt some sort of demonstration of the very considerable impact Anglo-Saxon art of the 10th and the first half of the 11th century had on art on the Continent. Admittedly this is an area in which a great deal more research would be necessary in order to provide a full picture, but already one could have assembled sufficient objects to give some sense of how the admiration expressed so clearly in the contemporary literary sources was also expressed in artistic terms of copying and emulation. The inclusion of the two Norman Gospels from Jumièges and from Préaux, both now in the British Library (nos. 261-2) and of the Lundo Cross from Copenhagen (no. 269. also shown in the Romanesque exhibition) did make this point, and were a spectacular close to the show. They would have had even more purpose if it had been possible to include other earlier Norman manuscripts such as the Sacramentary of Mont St. Michel, now in the Morgan Library, New York, or manuscripts from other parts of France and Flanders like the St. Vaast Bible from Arras with its Anglo-Saxon type outline drawings, or the Cysoing Gospels in Lille published by William Hinkle, or the Life of Ste. Radegonde at Poitiers with its Anglo-Saxon rosette frame to the first miniature (*Abb. 6a*). Moreover ivories such as those from Berlin and the British Library reproduced by Swarzenski and ascribed by him to St. Bertin and to Arras (?) could have been included.

In conclusion a few notes on problems raised by the catalogue:

no. 12. Winchester Portable Reliquary. Discovered in 1976 this is another example of a spectacular addition made to our surviving works of art by recent excavation. It is also a remarkable example of modern skill in restoration. With regard to the front panel with the Christ in Majesty (not reproduced in the catalogue) Cathy Haith comments on the "archaic features more commonly seen in earlier Insular manuscripts". I wonder if this is not in fact a classicising work of the 8th century, parallel to the Stockholm Gospels from Canterbury, to which the back panels which I would agree are certainly Carolingian, were added.

no. 19. Curved ivory mount. British Museum. Could this object conceivably be a scribe's ink horn? It would be nice to have a companion as to use for the famous ivory pen holder (no. 132).

no. 44. Boethius. Paris, B. n. lat. 6401. If this is really of the last quarter of the 10th century as Backhouse proposes then it must consciously copy an earlier style. I prefer the earlier date of mid or third quarter of 10th century as Wormald (not referred to) originally proposed. The Boethius clearly copies an Evangelist type

deriving from the Ada School. This in my opinion indicates that there were already in the time of Ethelwold, and quite probably earlier still, Gospels with portraits copying Carolingian Ada School models, which have not survived. Wormald's dating of the Pocket Gospels (no. 8) to the mid 10th century has always seemed on the other hand rather too early in view of its developed drapery style.

no. 75. Reliquary Cross from Brussels, Cathedral of S. Michel. The zooanthropomorphic symbols might suggest Breton models of which there were a number certainly available in England. This might also explain aspects of the style.

no. 76. Portable Altar from Cluny Museum, Paris. Here the symbols are interesting since they are the "terrestrial" type. This may be an instance of Insular influence. As such is it significant, because so relatively uncommon in the art of this period.

no. 115. Ivory with the Nativity from Liverpool, Merseyside County Museums. Included in the exhibition at the Whitworth Art Gallery held in 1976, no. 108. I still feel, as stated there, that it is closer in style to the Sacramentary of Robert of Jumièges than to the Benedictional of St. Ethelwold, and therefore of the early 11th not the late 10th century.

no. 117. Ivory in British Museum. Also included in the Romanesque exhibition, but the date here is surely the right one. The small size of the figure who is being baptized seems to me very strange if this is meant to be Christ. Could it conceivably be another Baptism by one of the Apostles that is represented?

no. 118. Crucifix Reliquary from the Victoria and Albert Museum. Webster proposes that the back is German to which the front was refitted in England c. 1000. It is a pity there is no photograph of the back. The filigree work on the front might perhaps be compared to the delicate scrolls found in the British Library Gospels, Add. 40618 (no. 8). In the manuscript context this is a feature taken from the 9th-century Tours school.

no. 127. Ivory Crucifixion plaque, Private Collection. St. John's Eagle seems to be duplicated below which is strange.

no. 129. Wood casket from the Cleveland Museum. If this had not been first recorded in England and bought by an American Museum, I wonder if it would have so consistently appeared in the literature as English? It seems to me to have all the stylistic features of the borderland area situated between Anglo-Saxon influence and Ottonian German influence, that is Flanders. It does not use the iconography of the "disappearing Christ" which it surely should do if English at this date.

no. 131. Ivory pierced panel. Cluny Museum, Paris. Redated by Webster from c. 1100 to first half 11th century. This seems to me correct, though if it is Anglo-Saxon it might even be earlier. It looks to me, however, as if it might be a Continental product copying English motifs. This would reinforce Webster's comparisons with St. Bertin manuscripts of the early 11th century.

no. 132. Ivory penner. British Museum. Webster dates this, as did Beckwith, to the mid 11th century, whereas Peter Lasko included it in the Romanesque

exhibition as late 11th century. I would prefer an early 11th century date by comparison with the Trinity Gospels.

no. 148. *Encomium Emmae Reginae*. British Library. It was a very good idea to include this little known manuscript. It comes from the library of St. Augustine's Canterbury. But it does not fit exactly into the Canterbury context. If it was not made in England, then it is more likely to be from Flanders than from Normandy as Backhouse suggests. The Lives of Saints from St. Bavon, Ghent, (University Library, Ms. 308) has initials copying English models and though they are not identical, there are some points of comparison (*Abb. 6b, 7a*).

no. 172. Winchester Cathedral Priory Cartulary. British Library. This has been discussed recently in detail by A. Rumble, *Proceedings of the Battle Conference on Anglo-Norman Studies*, 4 (1981).

no. 273. Fragment of ivory Crucifix figure excavated at Winchester. Webster proposes a post-Conquest date. In manuscripts palaeography can provide evidence to support the idea, first broached by Wormald, of the continuation of Anglo-Saxon style after the Conquest. The same continuity may have occurred in sculpture, but if there is no archaeological context or building dates, there is no other possible evidence but style. If the Crucifixion in the Arundel Psalter (no. 67) is taken as a point of departure for mid 11th century style, then how could this Crucifixion be of the same date or even later? It really is not at all like the Florence of Worcester drawing of which Webster sees it as a precursor.

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Rezensionen

OTTO PÄCHT, *Buchmalerei des Mittelalters. Eine Einführung*, herausgegeben von Dagmar Thoss und Ulrike Jenni. München, Prestel-Verlag, 1984. 221 Seiten mit 32 Farbtafeln und 210 Schwarzweißabbildungen. DM 68,—.

(mit zwei Abbildungen)

Die Wiener Kunstgeschichte kann in der Erforschung der Buchmalerei auf eine große Tradition zurückblicken. Schon Mitte der neunziger Jahre begann Franz Wickhoff, mit einer jungen Schar begabter Kunsthistoriker aus dem Institut für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung, sämtliche illuminierten Handschriften Österreichs in beschreibenden und illustrierten Katalogen zu publizieren. Zwischen 1905 und 1907 erschienen sieben Katalogbände, den Beständen verschiedener Provinzbibliotheken gewidmet. In der Zwischenkriegszeit folgten weitere fünfzehn Bände, davon dreizehn allein H. J. Hermanns Werk — eine imponierende Leistung. Mit dem zweiten Weltkrieg geriet das Unternehmen nochmals ins Stocken, wurde aber ab 1974 unter den Auspizien der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften