Alfred, his heirs and the traditions of manuscript production in tenth century England

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There has been universal recognition amongst historians and art historians that the late years of Alfred's reign mark the beginning of a period of resurgence of religious, intellectual and cultural activity, which prepared the way for the better-known achievements of the later tenth century. Despite this consensus on the general character of the time, amongst the analyses of surviving works of art it is possible to distinguish a variety of different approaches. One is that of the general survey, most recently represented by David Wilson's comprehensive book on Anglo-Saxon art.[1] Another seeks to group works, and particularly manuscripts, through the attribution of them to localised centres of production. A recent example of this is found in John Higgitt's analysis of tenth-century manuscripts argued to be from Glastonbury. This approach sees manuscripts somewhat simply as the realised products of monasteries and cathedrals, assuming the existence of scriptoria whose output would manifest stylistic similarities amongst the different books produced. It is an approach which has been very influential in the conventions of medieval art history.[2] Finally, there is the approach which makes more general attributions to geographical regions. Although this is more flexible than apparently tying manuscripts down to specific institutions, it remains dependent on an isomorphic logic which takes for granted particular systems for, and practices of, manuscript production.[3]

What these approaches omit is any thorough investigation of the institutional and organizational practices through which the resurgence of manuscript production was realised. The striking absence is any account of the historical milieu within which books

were commissioned, transcribed, illuminated and bound. It is surely not adequate to assume that, in the particular circumstances of the early tenth century, self-sufficient workshops were ready and able immediately to 'spring up' again. Rather, the complex of processes progressively instituted during the period must be examined, so that some insight can be gained into the interconnection between the new political and didactic emphases and the organisational practices through which manuscript production became one part of their realisation. The necessary starting point for such work is in the innovative policies of King Alfred. Subsequently, the continuation and modification of these can be traced through the reigns of his successors.

Alfred himself provides one of the best known statements on the condition to which the Church and formal education had been brought in England by the long struggle against the Vikings. In the Preface to his Old English translation of St. Gregory's *Pastoral Care*, he spoke of the loss of Latin learning and the deterioration of the institutional practices of the Church. Moreover, the statement, and, even more, Alfred's thorough plans for reorganising the transmission of learning and for founding new ecclesiastical institutions demonstrate his central concern with such matters as an essential part of his conception of the role of a king in caring for the welfare of his country.[4]

Institutional observance was to be reinforced and reformed by the dissemination of a range of doctrinal, historical and philosophical texts in Old English. These were apparently selected by the king in consultation with his advisors. The extent of Alfred's own learning, and the decline of Latinity in the dioceses, were both underlined by the preparation of translations from Latin into Old English at the royal court under the direction of Alfred himself, during the relative peace of the last years of his reign. It was then, apparently, the bishops who were to be responsible for having further copies made and for disseminating these more widely. Further, this initial movement for reform was to be supported by the establishment of a court school, to which, according to his biographer Asser, Alfred intended to devote a full quarter of his income. In this school free-born boys were to be trained first in reading and writing in Old English. Those selected as suitable for higher office were then to receive instruction in Latin.[5] Thus Alfred hoped to be able to guarantee for himself and his successors a supply of men trained and

educated in both spiritual and royal concerns; men taught the learning and traditions of the Church, ready to be put into leading positions within its hierarchy and who maintained strong affiliations to the royal dynasty of Wessex.

The initial core of scholars at Alfred's court was apparently small and drawn not only from surviving English centres of learning, particularly Worcester, but also from the continent. If there is no independent evidence for the continued existence of the school after Alfred's death, it is nevertheless clear that in his reign an important tradition of formal education at the royal court of Wessex was established. It has been suggested that Alfred's grandson, Athelstan, who was praised for his learning in his own lifetime, may have been educated for some time at the court school. This implies that it continued at least into the reign of Alfred's son and successor, Edward the Elder.[6] Moreover, Athelstan himself kept up a tradition of learning, for various sources attest to an impressive number of scholars, Anglo-Saxon, Irish, Breton, German, Italian and Jewish, who spent time at his court; and it was the scholarly clerics who remained closely associated with Athelstan who were responsible for the training of the leading members of the later 10th-century reform movement – Dunstan, Aethelwold and Oswald.[7]

Alfred's own contacts with the continent were also built and enlarged upon by Athelstan, both by a series of dynastic marriages, and by making his court a place of refuge for exiled members of the Carolingian royal dynasty and of the ducal family of Brittany. The negotiations through which such links were realised required trained and trusted representatives who could be sent on the necessary diplomatic missions to foreign courts. Here again, Athelstan followed Alfred's example. The senior churchmen, particularly bishops, who had spent some time in Athelstan's household, acting as his mass-priests, chaplains and scribes before their preferment, were of crucial importance for these roles. Men whose careers followed this pattern were Aelfheah (made Bishop of Wells in 926); Beornstan (made Bishop of Winchester in 931); a second Aelfheah (made Bishop of Winchester in 934); Oda (made Bishop of Ramsbury in 929 and Archbishop of Canterbury in 942) and Cenwald (made Bishop of Worcester in 928). The last of these was sent on a particularly important diplomatic mission to Germany in 929, most probably in connection with the marriage between Athelstan's half-sister, Edith, and Otto I, son of Henry the Fowler, in 929/30.[8]

Such negotiations, as well as the more routine matters of administration, necessitated the services not only of political advisors, but also of scribes. The number of trained scribes, especially those capable of writing a clear, regular Latin hand, must have been tiny in the circumstances described by Alfred; and indeed the surviving manuscripts from the period suggest a gradual growth of expertise, as the king's plans were executed. The teaching of a regular Latin hand must have been part of the activities of the Court school, and this, together with the necessity of charters and writs to be issued rapidly wherever the king's business was transacted, suggest that a high proportion of scribes must have spent of least a part of their careers in the king's retinue. Further, the terms of Alfred's plans suggest a distinction between scribes who could produce documents only in Old English, and those destined for higher office who were trained also in Latin.[9] It is likely that both would be part of the religious component of the king's household, but that only the latter could gain the title of mass-priest. This title is given, for instance, to two of the witnesses linked to the king's household, named in the record of a manumission performed by Athelstan, probably in 924. These witnesses were Beornstan and Aelfheah, whose subsequent careers as bishops have been mentioned above.[10]

The maintenance of the religious section of the royal household, with its liturgical, administrative and educational responsibilities, clearly necessitated the existence of a supply of books. These would presumably also have been in the care of the king's priests. However, the production of manuscripts such as those issued by Alfred required craftsmen skilled in the decoration of initial letters, and in the processes of binding, who may or may not have been the scribes themselves. Indeed, Asser describes a system of rotation, intended to maintain a guaranteed supply of personnel for several sectors of the king's household, including craftsmen.

Such a process of rotation suggests continuing interdependence between the king and the bishops in the re-establishment of organised copying and teaching also in the bishops' familiae and in the monasteries. The maintenance of administrative records and of book collections were just as important in these institutions; and the political structures of the country made continuing collaboration between them and the court a necessity. Even so, the number of centres which maintained any organised production of books and documents in a relatively uniform script was small, even at the height

of the monastic reform of the later tenth century. T.A.M. Bishop has shown that there were only perhaps twelve such centres, using the new caroline minuscule, in the reign of Edgar;[11] and in the time of Athelstan the number must have been smaller still. Moreover, it has been suggested that the trained square minuscule, found in a number of the most important manuscripts surviving from Athelstan's reign, should be seen as the script 'officially' adopted by the king for the books and documents to be associated with his reign, and developed from that of Alfred's manuscripts.[12]

The execution of such a centralised cultural policy again depends upon the existence of some means of directing the training and work of scribes, which points once more to the existence of a writing-office, and perhaps a school, within the religious sector to the king's household. The individuals who staffed these departments may well have circulated between the court and the episcopal familiae in the manner suggested by M. Wood, a manner which would help to disseminate the officially adopted script. Moreover, it has already been suggested that in the royal household, secular craftsmen would be present, as well as scribes, and it thus seems that the royal household itself may have been just as capable of producing a decorated and richly-bound manuscript as the episcopal and monastic centres.

Equally, the structures of circulation thus established imply that scribes and illuminators would work both at the court and in ecclesiastical centres during their careers. The patterns of contact and influence which would be the product of interchange and interaction within this restricted pool contradict the argument for self-sufficient scriptoria, each with its own recognisable style. Thus it is not possible to talk of a Winchester, or of a Glastonbury school, if so to do is to imply that a set of scribes and illuminators developed distinctive work in such a centre throughout their careers, drawing on and sustaining locally established styles. Clearly such historic houses would have important, and respected, book collections which scribes and illuminators could make use of to produce variants, or to add to their own existing stock of motifs; but this iconographic interchange would take place within the structures of centralisation and inter-connection already outlined. That this is a more accurate portrait of the real situation gains particular support from the near certainty that the most skilled scribes and illuminators would be employed within the households of the bishops, who themselves travelled widely.

Through attention to the careers of Dunstan, Aethelwold and

Oswald it can further be suggested that this pattern continued in the later tenth century. As these men themselves moved from one religious centre to another, the processes of reorganisation and the patterns of communication in which they engaged would have required reliable and experienced assistants; and those who could act as scribes must surely have been amongst these. Different but related support for this suggested model can come through reflection on the accounts of houses such as Glastonbury and Worcester. These suggest communities where the ancient books were respected as religious treasures, and in which the copying of manuscripts was not a part of the general routine. The abbot's books were distinct from those of the monks.[13]

However, the revival effected by Alfred could only have taken place if, as a minimum, some scribes and scholars were available, together with manuscripts to be used as models. In the active re-engagement with learning that he instituted, one house does appear to have acted as a vitally important centre of scholarship, for at least the earlier part of the century. The surviving evidence suggests that Worcester, relatively protected from the Viking wars by its geographical position, may have played a crucial role. Thus four of Alfred's small circle of scholars and literary helpers were Mercians. Two of these were Werferth, Bishop of Worcester from 873, and Werwulf, a member of his household. The other Mercians were a priest called Plegmund, who became Archbishop of Canterbury in 890, and another priest, called Athelstan. These were complemented by Asser from Wales and two Continental scholars: John the Old Saxon, put in charge of Alfred's unsuccessful monastic foundation at Athelney; and Grimbald of St-Bertin, sent to Alfred by Fulk of Rheims in return for a present of greyhounds.

Scribes continued to produce charters at Worcester during the reign of Alfred's successor, Edward the Elder, and copies of ninth-century Mercian documents were also maintained there. Simon Keynes has argued that it was this Worcester tradition which was drawn on again in Athelstan's reign, together with a revived study of the Latin style and vocabulary of Aldhelm.[14] This latter is evidenced in two charters of 928, an inscription entered into the MacDurnan Gospels (London, Lambeth Pal. 1370) when they were given by Athelstan to Christ Church, Canterbury, and the series of 'alliterative' charters of the 940s and 950s. The linking figures behind the stylistic similarities amongst this range of documents appear to be Cenwald of Worcester

and Oda of Canterbury. The former became Bishop of Worcester in 928, and would have been in a position to bring back copies of Aldhelm's lost works from his mission to Germany. He would also have been able to travel with the king, presumably accompanied by a secretary, to meetings of councillors throughout Southern England, at which the relevant charters were issued. The growing use of grecisms in Athelstan's charters has, however, been linked by Michael Lapidge to the personal learning and influence of Oda of Canterbury.[15]

The picture built up is, therefore, of the library and archives of Worcester being drawn on by successive bishops to support the cultural policies of the kings of Wessex. These bishops were themselves learned men, who both put their learning at the service of the kings, and were the employers of scribes. However, what is significantly absent is any evidence to suggest that Worcester acted as a centre for the independent production of decorated or illuminated manuscripts. The contrast between Wells and both St. Augustine's at Canterbury and Glastonbury in the early tenth century again suggests that it was the bishops, together with the royal court, who played the crucial role in initiating and realising the gradual revival of manuscript production and connected scholarly activity. Both St. Augustine's and Glastonbury appear to have survived into the early tenth century, the latter as a church of clerks in the possession of the king. Both equally appear to have kept up their book collections, with Glastonbury's library being augmented by Celtic pilgrims, accounting for the books studied by Dunstan when he was there. However, neither house appears, from all the currently available evidence, to have itself been responsible for the production of manuscripts. In contrast, Christopher Hohler has suggested that Wells, which became a see in 908, was a centre of liturgical development in the period before the Benedictine reform. He has argued that it was capable of producing a new Mass for St. Cuthbert, written mainly in verse, which came to be very influential.[16] Thus at least one written text was composed there, presumably under the supervision and influence of the bishop; that this text was known to King Athelstan will subsequently be demonstrated.

If the preceding arguments emphatically underline the centrality of royal and episcopal patronage through the tenth century, they equally provide an appropriate framework within which more closely to examine the form and style of the surviving manuscripts from the reigns of Alfred, Edward and Athelstan; a time which Francis

Wormald has called 'the low period of English art'.[17] Just as the outlined evidence for particular structures of patronage casts doubt on any proposition dependent on the isolation and definition of 'local styles' in manuscript production through this period, so it brings instead the royal court to the centre of attention.

It has been agreed that Alfred's cultural policy initiated a new phase in the production of manuscripts in Southern England. If his programme for the dissemination of translations of key texts for the revival of historical, geographical and doctrinal knowledge has already been outlined, it is now possible to be more specific about one of the works associated with this programme, in which Alfred himself apparently played a particularly large part, and for which he composed a special preface. This was Gregory the Great's *Pastoral Care*, a text presumably intended by the king to help stimulate the revival of religious life by the secular clergy. One of the original copies of this translation survives in Bodl: Hatton 20, which is thus datable to 890-97. Fragments of another early copy are found in B.L. Cott. Tib. B xi and Kassel, Landesbib., Anhang 19.

Hatton 20 is the copy presented to Werferth, Bishop of Worcester. It was very possibly produced in Alfred's own court. The script is an early, but clearly handled version of the English square minuscule. The hand is clear and well-spaced, though a little uneven. What is most striking about the manuscript is the small size and retrograde appearance of the 2/3 line decorated initials and marginal decorations which mark separate sections of the text. Both have small human heads, and, more frequently, small dog-like creatures, or biting heads. These animals, and the interlace with which they are frequently combined, have been linked with late eighth and early ninth-century Kentish and Mercian book decorations as in the Barberini Gospels (Vat. Barb. lat. 570) and the Book of Cerne (Camb. U.L. L1 1 10). The link may be the result of Alfred's apparent respect for eighth century scholarship and religious culture; but they may also reflect the continuing use of such animal motifs in Southern English metalwork of the mid to later ninth century. A striking example of the latter would be the two royal rings, now in the British Museum, inscribed with the names of Alfred's father, King Aethelwulf (839-58), and of Queen Aethelswith (853/4 – 888/9).[18]

Not a first generation text like Hatton 20, but still associated with Alfred's literary programme is B.L. Add. Ms. 47967, the Tollemache Orosius. The manuscript is written in a more confident and regular

square minuscule and has zoomorphic initials in ink outline for each of the first five books, with a space for one which was never supplied at the beginning of book six. The manuscript has been dated on stylistic grounds to the early tenth century, which would presumably mean the reign of Edward the Elder, although this has been seen as a period of stagnation in religious and cultural activity. This view, however, may not be entirely justified. It was Edward who completed Alfred's plans for a new Minster at Winchester, and who responded to a letter from Pope John IX when he increased the number of bishops of Wessex from two to five. This was in consultation with Plegmund, the learned hermit nominated as Archbishop of Canterbury by Alfred. Such a series of new foundations must have required the establishment of new book collections, including, presumably, new copies of the Alfredian translations. It is justified to argue that the Tollemache Orosius would have formed an important part of such a set.

Another such book is Oxford, Bodl. Ms Tanner 10, a copy of the Old English translation of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, dated to the first half of the tenth century and written in a related script. The initials of the earlier manuscript have terminal animal heads still related to those found in Hatton 20. These are equally to be found in Tanner 10. It has been pointed out that both the Orosius and the Bede are still related to the Barberini Gospels, or perhaps even more fully to B.L. Ms. Cott. Tib. C ii, a copy, dating from the first half of the 9th century, of the Latin text of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. However, both are also innovative, and distinct from contemporary continental work, in having their decorated initials wholly or substantially made up of the twisted bodies of dragons and beak-headed beasts. The best parallels for these fantastic animals are again found in artefacts from the ninth century. In this instance it is again in metalwork, particularly in some of the objects decorated in what D. Wilson has called the Trewhiddle style, which was patronised by the royal house of Wessex.[19] Certain of these objects, particularly a pair of brooches from Pentney, Norfolk, have elongated and interlaced beasts consonant with this style in combination with symmetrical stems of stylised plant scroll. It is decoration similar to that found in tenth-century manuscripts. Earlier identified as a distinctive feature of the Aethelwulf/Aethelswith royal rings, the innovative combination of these motifs with ones taken directly from much earlier insular manuscripts is seen especially effectively in the Tanner Bede. In this

manuscript orange, yellow and green are used to fill in the initials; and, as in many eighth-century manuscripts, several letters in an opening word, rather than just the initial letter, are decorated.

All this suggests a phase of innovation, when a variety of sources were drawn on, and illuminators had the freedom to experiment. Perhaps the most effective example of this ability is again to be found in the Tanner Bede, where, very unusually, several initials are partly formed of human figures. Such phenomena might be expected in a time of growing demand for books, especially when there was a shortage of experienced illuminators and, in the milieu of the court or a developing religious centre, craftsmen working in several media would be brought together and work alongside each other. Such a conjecture is further reinforced by the links, iconographic and stylistic, which can be established between manuscripts and the surviving examples both of wall painting and embroidery. Strong links for these can be established both with the court and the ecclesiastical centres of Winchester.

The most important surviving fragment of wall painting from England in this period is that found on a stone re-used in the foundations of New Minster, Winchester and therefore painted earlier than c.902.[20] Although this painting also includes a fragment of geometric border in a Carolingian pattern, the human head, which is its main motif, is in an independent, distinctive style. The face is clean-shaven with a heavy, rounded chin, large staring eyes under heavy arched brows, a small mouth and wig-like hair. Similar heads occur on the figures in the set of embroideries made in the early tenth century for the Bishop of Winchester, Frithestan, and commissioned by Queen Aelfflaed (d. 916). They also figure in Bodl. Ms. Junius 27, a psalter with Old English interlinear gloss, dated to the second quarter of the tenth century.

The embroideries are the closest in date to the wall painting, and their stylistic similarity to it, together with their early ownership, have led to their being regarded as 'Winchester' products. However such an attribution raises a number of questions as to the precise centre in which they were made, especially as it is highly unlikely that work in this medium would be executed by monks.[21] The exceptional quality of the work suggests a highly skilled, and perhaps professional, embroideress, working for the Queen. The designer, it can reasonably be presumed, was somebody known to the court as a skilled painter, who, as has already been suggested, was peripatetic,

moving in the circles of both royal and ecclesiastical patronage. If such an argument locates, but fails fully to specify, the craftspeople responsible for the creation and execution of these embroideries, equally puzzling is the fact that, produced for Frithestan, they were so soon back in royal possession, and thus able to be given by Athelstan to the shrine of St. Cuthbert at Chester-le-Street.[22]

The decoration of the embroideries consists of a set of elongated, standing figures of prophets and saints together with inscripts and foliate decoration of acanthus leaves supplemented by small bird-like creatures. The heads are stylistically related to the wall-painting fragment, which itself was presumably to be seen in Winchester during the opening years of the tenth-century. Stylistic comparisons between the figures and Byzantine manuscript illuminations have been suggested, but are not wholly convincing. That the style was used in contemporary English manuscript painting is demonstrated by reference to the Junius Psalter, which itself also has stylistic connections with the Tollemache Orosius.

This psalter is another manuscript which has been seen as a product of a 'Winchester school', with all the problems that such an attribution has been shown to raise. The argument depends partly on the psalter's text, which includes part of an early tenth-century Wessex metrical calendar, with obits for Alfred and his wife Ealhswith. This calendar is found in full as an addition to another psalter with court associations, the Athelstan Psalter, B.L. Cott. Galba A XVIII. This second occurrence has been seen as a part of the confirmation of the Winchester attribution, as has E. Bishop's belief that the calendar was the work of Irishmen who visited the West Saxon court at the turn of the ninth and tenth centuries.[23] The obits have led to other suggestions that it was linked to the New Minster, where Alfred and his wife were buried. However, the joint occurrence of the particular stylistic features of the decoration with the metrical calendar do not fit easily into attribution to a particular religious house. It would appear more likely that the Junius Psalter was produced within a context open to and sustaining a more diverse range of artefacts, texts and practices. Thus it is suggested that the manuscript should be seen as the result of an individual commission from within the orbit of the court, not part of a more regularised and established system of production. For, if the commission came from a wealthy and educated person who, through his or her status, was able to draw on the pool of texts, scribes and artists generally

available to the magnates, both lay and ecclesiastical, then the apparent contradictions of the suggested associations are resolved, and the necessity to place the manuscript within the output of a permanently-organised scriptorium is removed.

If the initials of Junius 27 are clearly related in design and motif, including their use of stylised foliage, to those of the Tollemache Orosius, the script used in the two manuscripts is also very close, although they do not appear to be in the same hand. However, the colouring of the initials of Junius 27 is fuller than even that of Tanner 10, using blue, yellow, brown and pink, with white. It is very rich in its effect. Moreover the inclusion of human heads in the initials of Junius 27 does not only form a part of their general decorative repertoire. For in this manuscript, there are also initials historiated with bust figures. An example would be the 'H' on f3v. This is something found in the mid eighth-century Leningrad Bede (Leningrad, Public Library, Ćod. Q v I 18). Additionally, on f118r, the manuscript has an initial 'D' historiated with a picture of David fighting the lion. This is something found in the Vespasian Psalter (B.L. Cott. Vesp. A 1) also of the eighth-century. The idea of using historiated initials had been taken up in Carolingian manuscripts, especially those associated with Drogo of Metz. In some of these latter works an acanthus also appears, which equally may have influenced the artist of Junius 27. However, the specific details of his decoration, as in the use of an inhabited vine-scroll, suggest that he was looking back to earlier English art, rather than Carolingian, for his models.

The manuscripts whose script and decoration have been discussed so far suggest a movement, almost a continuous stylistic development, which, constantly drawing on earlier English manuscripts, was also interlinked with work in other artistic media. Moreover, there is enough evidence to suggest that this development continued across that period often characterised as an hiatus, the reign of Edward the Elder, and that it enjoyed both royal and ecclesiastical patronage. Slightly divergent, however, is the evidence presented by the manuscript whose metrical calendar is linked to that of Junius 27. This work, Cotton Galba A XVIII, is known as the 'Athelstan Psalter', largely because of a 16th century note written on f1v: 'psaltirium Regis Ethelstani Emptum per dompnum Thomam Rectorum de colbroke Wynton 1542 precium ( )'. This manuscript and its attribution to Athelstan's ownership have been discussed in

detail by Simon Keynes, who concludes that the claim is incapable either of proof or of disproof.[24] The manuscript has its origins in the ninth century, probably made in the neighbourhood of Liege. It was in Southern England by the early tenth century. It was here that the previously cited metrical calendar was added, in a script which, on both palaeographical grounds and because of the royal obits, can be dated to the first quarter of the tenth century. The calendar has decorated initials, and these are linked, both by style and by the pigment used, to a set of miniatures added at various points into the manuscript. Four of these survive, three in the manuscript itself, and one inserted into a different manuscript in the Bodleian Library (Ms Rawl. B 484, f85). The first two miniatures are associated with the calendar and its accompanying computistical material. They were added, one near the beginning of the first quire, the other at the end of the second (ff2 & 21). Both show Christ enthroned among the choirs of Heaven. This is a subject not previously to be found in Anglo-Saxon illumination. It appears subsequently to have influenced the choice of miniatures for the Benedictional of St.Aethelwold, made for him in Winchester c971-85. Such a connection would suggest that the Athelstan Psalter was known to St. Aethelwold and, because it seems also to have influenced other Winchester manuscripts, the evidence points to it having been in Winchester by the later tenth century, although precisely where is unknown. The other two surviving miniatures show the Nativity and Ascension. The former, now separated from its original location, preceded Psalm 1. The latter still precedes Psalm 101. This makes it almost certain that there would have been at least one other miniature which would have preceded Psalm 51 and possibly have shown the Crucifixion.

The sources and iconography of these miniatures have been discussed in great detail by Deshman, Wormald and Alexander.[25] Their analyses suggest again a decorative scheme in which were combined considerable innovation and the use of a range of other sources. These include eighth-century Insular manuscript painting, here combined with influences from the Court School of Charles the Bald; manuscripts associated with Metz; and Byzantine sources not apparently drawn on in any of the earlier works. However divergent such a series appears to be, it is consistent with the kinds of sources that I have suggested would have been available to the artists whose work I have already discussed. Indeed, the innovative pictorial litany of the first two miniatures demonstrates effectively how these artists

could combine their motifs in new ways when a commission called upon them so do to. For example, both the Byzantine sources, and the unusual emphasis on the Instruments of the Passion in the miniatures of Christ enthroned, have suggested links not just with Athelstan's court, but with Athelstan himself, as both owner - from 926 - of the spear of Charlemagne, believed to be Longinus' lance, and user of the royal style 'anglorum basyleos'. In more general terms, Byzantine works appear to have been highly regarded by Athelstan. He gave a paten of Greek workmanship to the shrine of St. Cuthbert and used the byzantinising title of 'basyleos' both in the commemorative inscription for a gospels which he presented to Christ Church, Canterbury (a late ninth-century continental manuscript, now B.L. Cott. Tib A 11) and in charters through from 935 to 939.

Stylistically however, the miniatures still raise several problems. They appear to be by two hands. The artist of the Nativity and the second miniature of Christ enthroned arranges his compositions more fluently and uses a softer, more flowing outline. However, the figures produced by both artists have heads and hands that are large in comparison to their bodies, and the treatment of their faces and hair has something in common with the figurative style already discussed. In the miniature of the Ascension, the handling of paint, and the use of bold highlighting, resembles the technique of the artist of Junius 27, though here it is less skilfully realised. There is one striking feature in the first miniature - that of Christ with the Chorus of angels and prophets. This is the use of monster-heads as clasps at the corners of the otherwise plain frame. Illustrated as being in the act of biting, these heads again appear to be derived from the Insular manuscripts repeatedly used by the artists of these early tenth century works. They particularly parallel the Book of Cerne, where similarly large biting heads are used as clasps in the frame of the miniature in which is shown the portrait and symbol of St. John.

Thus, whilst the links of Galba A XVIII to Athelstan himself remain tenuous, both its content and its sources are consistent with the cultural world and mentality suggested for his court and ecclesiastical associates. Further evidence, which is more fully direct, about this mentality may be deduced from two instances in which Athelstan, or one of his close advisers, was known to have commissioned miniatures for works to be ceremonially presented to major ecclesiastical centres.

The first of these was added to a ninth/tenth-century Breton gospels, given by Athelstan again to the shrine of St. Cuthbert, probably in 934. Unfortunately, this manuscript, now B.L. Cott. Otho B ix, was almost completely destroyed by fire so that the miniature is only known from descriptions. It showed the crowned Athelstan kneeling to present the book to St. Cuthbert, who was seated in his church. The miniature had an accompanying inscription, recording its donation by the king. If its composition was, to judge from the surviving accounts, new in Anglo Saxon art, it was similar to that of presentation pictures found in Carolingian copies of a work by Rabanus Maurus, the *De Laude Crucis*. Trin. Coll. Camb. ms B 16 3 demonstrates that this work was known in early tenth-century England. This manuscript, a faithful copy of a ninth-century original, also uses architectural framing for the figures in the presentation miniature. Unfortunately the provenance of this Trinity Rabanus is unknown, although Francis Wormald connects it to his 'Winchester school'.[26]

Simon Keynes has examined in detail the surviving evidence of the circumstances in which Athelstan made his gift of Otho B ix to the community of St. Cuthbert.[27] He notes the inclusion, written on f1v in Insular minuscule, of the colophon to a prayer to St. Cuthbert, apparently included on the instruction of one 'Benedict the Irishman'. He goes on to suggest that the date given in this colophon, the kalends of July, would fit with the probable time of Athelstan's presence, during 934, in the North. Through establishing this connection, he believes that the prayer was added to the manuscript when it was presented. However, whilst it is possible that this 'Benedict' was the Benedictus episcopus who seems to have been part of the king's entourage, it is still not clear why he would have had the prayer entered in a book to be presented by the king. Whatever the resolution to this problem, there remains little doubt that the miniature and its inscription were commissioned by Athelstan himself, and it is therefore very probable that they were connected to the miniature in CCC ms 183. This is a manuscript which appears to have been specially produced for Athelstan to present to Chester-le-Street. It is almost certainly the *Life of St. Cuthbert* written in verse and prose which in the *Historia de S. Cuthberto* is stated to have been given by Athelstan on his way to Scotland. This therefore dates the year of the gift as 934.[28]

There has been considerable discussion of the origins, both of the

illumination and text, of this manuscript. The presentation miniature is clearly related to that which was added into Otho B ix. Again it suggests Carolingian models, though in this case they are not restricted to the Rabanus manuscripts. In this instance the king stands upright, though with bowed head, and Cuthbert is represented standing outside his church, apparently on the steps. The crown and garments of the king have been compared to those of Charles the Bald as pictured in a miniature which shows him kneeling before the cross in the Gebetbuch Karls des Kahlen, Munich Schutzkammer Residenz, f38v.[29] However, the posture of the figures, the treatment of drapery, the expressive hands, and the rather weak legs and feet of the saint, are all much closer to the figures in the Bible of Charles the Bald, produced c846 in Tours. Even more accurately, they are perhaps especially close to those in the scenes of the Life of St Jerome. This includes a scene of Jerome giving out copies of his translation to clerics. They are shown carrying them into small, gabled churches, represented in perspective, with slanting aisle roofs. Together with round-headed arched openings, such structures are also found in manuscript illuminations and ivory carvings from ninth-century Rheims. In the case of the Cuthbert illuminator, although a similar building appears, he seems to have misunderstood the system by which the aisle roofs are represented.

This Carolingian comparison is strengthened by the suggestion that a ninth-century manuscript from the court school of Charles the Bald, drawing on works from Tours and Rheims for its cycle of illustrations, may have been at the West Saxon court in the early 10th century. This would be an illuminated copy of the Old Saxon Genesis and Heliand. Barbara Raw has suggested that this was translated into early West Saxon and copied in the late ninth or early tenth century, providing a model for the surviving Anglo-Saxon copy. This was made probably in the second quarter of the 11th century and is now Bodleian Junius 11.[30] Ms Raw has further suggested that the Carolingian original could have come to the West Saxon court at the time of the marriage, in 856, of Alfred's father, Aethelwulf, to Judith, daughter of Charles the Bald.

There are other elements of the Athelstan miniature in CCC 183 through which it can be linked to the 'West Saxon court' group. One of these is the treatment of the heads, especially that of St. Cuthbert. This can again be compared to the New Minster wall painting fragment, and to the heads in Junius 27. The colours used also have a

related effect to those of Tanner 10. Further, the frame of the miniature is filled with varied plant-scrolls and inhabited scrolls. The foliage of these is comparable to that twisted into initials in the Psalter. Such a comparison is strengthened by the use, in the decorated initials of CCC 183, of a similar repertoire of winged beasts and terminal heads to those found in the Tollemache Orosius.

The script of CCC 183 also links it to other contemporary manuscripts. The main hand appears again in a copy of Aldhelm's prose *De Virginitate* (B.L. Royal 7 D XXIV), and possibly in the calendar added to the Athelstan Psalter. This suggests a scribe who worked for members of both the royal and episcopal circles. Moreover, it is possible that this scribe travelled with Athelstan in 934, if that is the year in which the manuscript was given to Chester-le-Street. This can be argued because the names of two bishops who took up their positions no earlier than June 934 are included in episcopal lists integral to the text; and the king's travels began in May of that year. Moreover, that the scribe was not a member of any of the Winchester houses, or, presumably, resident in Winchester, can be justified when it is observed that there are defects in the list of Winchester bishops. These go so far as the omission of Byrnstan, the previous Bishop.

Indeed, the inclusion of a special liturgical office for St. Cuthbert in the manuscript has suggested that Athelstan and his advisers were drawing on expertise from the West of Wessex when they commissioned the work. Both Glastonbury and Wells gave a special importance to St. Cuthbert in the tenth century. As a development of this point, Christopher Hohler has argued that Wells, in the period after it became a see in 908, was an important centre of liturgical development, able to draw on texts from Sherborne, St. Samson's of Dol and the English Coronation service.[31] In the text of CCC 183, there is included a wordlist for the metrical Vita, and specially collected extracts from the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. These suggest that its compilers were able to draw for their work on established textual study. Aelfheah, who became Bishop of Wells c926, had almost certainly been one of Athelstan's mass-priests, and thus would have been well-placed in 934 to supply texts assembled by his followers at Wells. It is possible that it was one of these very followers, unfamiliar as he would have been with the see of Winchester, but with other more specialised liturgical knowledge, who travelled with the king.

If it is possible then that the scribe of CCC 183 came from Wells, it is not necessary to suppose that its illuminator had also worked there. It has already been suggested that the presentation miniature appears deliberately to draw on Carolingian sources with royal associations, and that some of these were probably available at court. Moreover, the link between this miniature and that added to Otho B ix make it more likely that it was the work of a painter already employed at court. Such a suggestion is strengthened by the stylistic similarity between the initials of CCC 183 and those of the earlier Wessex manuscripts. For all these reasons, it becomes impossible to see this book as the product of an ecclesiastical scriptorium, located in the West Country. If, alternatively, I have suggested that, in both form and detail, it is the result of a range of institutional interconnections, evidence from the analysis of charters, again in the work of Simon Keynes, provides additional support to such a hypothesis.[32]

Further support for the argument that work which involved both textual additions and the insertion of miniatures into an existing manuscript could take place in direct association with the royal court is afforded by B.L. Add. 40618, an Irish pocket-gospels. In the first half of the 10th century, textual additions were made to this manuscript by an 'Eduardus diaconus', two miniatures were added at ff22v and 29v, and two illuminated initials were painted over earlier ones. The miniatures are evangelist portraits, with decorated borders, of Luke and John. Wormald has linked the use of gripping heads, leaf scroll and foliate bosses to motifs in Junius 27, CCC 183 and Galba A XVIII. In the handling of the drapery, however, there is evidence of Carolingian influences. So again this suggests a particular, more plural, set of stylistic influences and correspondences. Through biographical evidence concerning 'Eduardus diaconus', the connection of this plurality to the retinues of Athelstan can be more fully particularised; a specific connection made with the royal court. He has been identified with a man who was with the king at Colchester in March 931, and again with him at Lifton in November 932.[33]

Through the preceding arguments, something of the interconnection between political and religious concepts in the mentality of the court of Wessex has begun to be established. If the patronage of scribes and illuminators has been shown to be an important element in this, it is clear that the books they produced were, in two different ways, highly valued. Firstly they were

important as the carriers of texts which helped to transmit and confirm sets of values and concepts central to the governing group of tenth-century England. Secondly they were respected as religious treasures, worthy of rich decoration, and capable, when given as gifts, of cementing personal bonds and associations. If a small number of individuals formed the ruling elite, equally the striking stylistic uniformity of the surviving manuscripts suggests that the pool of scribes and illuminators to be drawn on was both limited in size and mobile in its location. To realise this makes it necessary to generate a new model for the institutional structures through which patronage was exercised. In this changed patterning, it is the royal court which appears as the hub, the pivotal axis in the exchange of ideas and skills; and the central place in which Carolingian and Byzantine associations would have an especial importance. So to argue, however, is not to propose the substitution of a 'Wessex Court School' for any of the other schools which form the basis of previous attributive systems. Out from the centre radiate other loci, each a potential alternative site for commission and book production. Thus, in contrast to a patterning, fixed and building-based, a more fluid structure is proposed, one crucially dependent on personal contacts and consequent commissions. Within this, the royal court provided definition and focus, as it formed and promoted the leading ideas, established and actively supported the careers of particular individuals.

Such a model provides a convincing milieu within which to place the early formation of the ways of thinking and associated values pursued by Dunstan, Aethelwold and Oswald. These were the main leaders of the Benedictine reform in the generation following the reign of Athelstan. Of the three, the first was himself known as an artist; whilst Aethelwold appears to have been the leader of literary activity in both Latin and Old English at the Old Minster, as well as commissioning one of the most famous manuscripts of the later tenth century, the Benedictional which bears his name.[34] It is the careers of these men that afford evidence of the slow and uneven fostering of scriptoria located in the reformed religious centres for which they held responsibility. Thus it was Godeman, one of Aethelwold's monks, who acted as scribe for his Benedictional; and whilst Oswald was at Worcester, a member of that community acted as scribe for the house. In reward for his labours, it is recorded that he received grants of land.[35] This suggests that, if at this time a scriptorium had been organised as a part of the house, to work in it had not yet been

established as constituting part of the unrecompensed labours required of educated monks. Thus it appears that it is only at the very end of the tenth century, as the balance shifts, to be shared between the directives of both the new ecclesiastical reformers and their royal patrons, that monastic scriptoria and their practices were properly instituted. As a complementary consequence, it is only when addressing works from this date onwards, that reference to this more fully regulated system can be used as a reliable working methodology for the attribution, textual and stylistic analysis of illuminated manuscripts.

Notes

1 David M. Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Art: from the Seventh Century to the Norman Conquest*, London 1984.

2 John Higgitt, 'Glastonbury, Dunstan, Monasticism and Manuscripts', *Art History Vol. 2, No. 3, Sept. 1979, 275-90.*

3 For instance see the entries on manuscripts in the catalogue: J. Backhouse, D.H. Turner and L. Webster eds., *The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art 966-1066*, London 1984.

4 This survives in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Hatton 20. For a facsimile see N.R. Ker ed., *The Pastoral Care: Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile No. 6*, London 1956. Also see S. Keynes and M. Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of Alfred and other contemporary sources*, Harmondsworth 1983 (especially Asser, Chapters 75, 76 and 102).

5 See H. Sweet, *King Alfred's West Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care*, Oxford 1871-72, p.7. A translation is given in D. Whitelock ed., *English Historical Documents*, 2nd ed., London 1979, p.889.

6 For a discussion of poems concerning Athelstan, see M. Lapidge, 'Some Latin Poems as evidence for the reign of Athelstan', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 9, 1981, 61-98.

7 For further detail on visitors to Athelstan's court, see M. Wood, 'The Making of King Athelstan's Empire: an English Charlemagne?', in P. Wormald ed., *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society*, Oxford 1983, pp. 250-272.

8 An analysis of the sources concerning this visit is given in S. Keynes, 'King Athelstan's books' in M. Lapidge and H. Gneuss eds., *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England, Cambridge 1985, pp.198-201.*

9 See note 5.

10 The record was entered into B.L. Royal 1 B VII, an 8th-century Insular Gospels, in a blank space on f15v.

11 T.A.M. Bishop, *English Caroline Minuscule*, Oxford 1971, p.xv.

12 T.A.M. Bishop, 'An Early Example of the Square Minuscule' in *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society, 4, 1968, 246-252.*

13 For information on Worcester in the reform period see P. Sawyer, 'Charters of the Reform Movement: The Worcester Archive', in D. Parsons ed., *Tenth -Century Studies*, London 1975, pp.84 ff.

14 S. Keynes, in Lapidge and Gneuss, pp.156-59.

15 For an analysis of Oda's use of grecisms and a hermeneutic Latin style, see M. Lapidge, 'The hermeneutic style of tenth century Anglo-Saxon literature', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 4, 1975, 67-112.

16 See C. Hohler, 'Some Service Books of the Later Saxon Church', in Parsons, pp.69-71.

17 Francis Wormald, ' "The Winchester School" before St Aethelwold', in P. Clemoes and K. Hughes eds., *England Before the Conquest*, Cambridge 1971, p.308.

18 For diagrams and photographs, see Wilson, p.96 and figs. 117 & 118.

19 Wilson, p.96 and fig. 120.

20 The importance of this fragment was demonstrated by Wormald, in Clemoes and Hughes, pp.305-15.

21 The Winchester ecclesiastical centres were: the Old Minster (the Cathedral); the New Minster (later Hyde Abbey) and Nunnaminster. It is possible that the last of these housed skilled embroideresses, however the court itself should also be considered as a potential centre of production.

22 The list of Athelstan's gifts to Chester-le-Street is given in a passage in the *Historia de S. Cuthberto*, probably based on an inscription entered into Cotton Ms. Otho B ix. This manuscript was itself one of those gifts, but it was subsequently destroyed by fire.

23 E. Bishop, *Liturgica Historica*, Oxford 1918, pp.140 ff & pp.254 ff.

24 Keynes, in Lapidge and Gneuss, pp.193-96.

25 See R. Deshman, 'Anglo-Saxon Art After Alfred', *Art Bulletin* 56, 1974, 176-200; Wormald, 1971; J.J.G. Alexander, 'The Benedictional of St. Athelwold and Anglo-Saxon Illumination of the Reform Period' in Parsons.

26 Wormald, in Clemoes and Hughes.

27 Keynes, in Lapidge and Gneuss, pp.170-79.

28 See note 20.

[29] For the comparisons, and a reproduction from the *Gebetbuch Karls des Kahlen*, see M. Wood, p.269 and fig.VII.

[30] B. Raw, 'The probable derivation of most of the illustrations in Junius 11 from an illustrated Old Saxon Genesis', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 5, 1976, 133-48.

[31] Hohler.

[32] See S. Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Aethelred The Unready*', Cambridge 1980.

[33] Wormald, in Clemoes and Hughes.

[34] For evidence concerning Aethelwold's literary activities and school see M. Lapidge, 'Three Latin Poems from Aethelwold's school at Winchester', *Anglo-Saxon England* , 1, 1972, 85-107 and H. Gneuss, 'The Origin of Standard Old English and Aeþelwold's school at Winchester', ibid., 63-83.

[35] Sawyer.