CORA Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

| | |
|---|---|
| Title | Review of 'The Ruthwell Cross: Papers from the Colloquium Sponsored by the Index of Christian Art, Princeton University, 8 December 1989', ed. by Brendan Cassidy |
| Authors | Ó Carragáin, Éamonn |
| Publication date | 1994 |
| Original Citation | Ó Carragáin, É. (1994) 'Review of 'The Ruthwell Cross: Papers from the Colloquium Sponsored by the Index of Christian Art, Princeton University, 8 December 1989', ed. by Brendan Cassidy', Medium Ævum, 63(2), p. 317-319. https://doi.org/10.2307/43629746 |
| Type of publication | Review |
| Link to publisher's version | https://doi.org/10.2307/43629746 - 10.2307/43629746 |
| Rights | © 1994 Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature |
| Download date | 2026-10-30 18:55:55 |
| Item downloaded from | https://hdl.handle.net/10468/15262 |

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

*gan*, loss of intervocalic *h*, *j*, and *w*), contraction in negated verbs, compensatory lengthening, analogical lengthening, Kaluza's Law, tertiary stress, miscellaneous variables, late developments, together with a section on indicators of dialect origins (especially syncope in verb inflections), and various appendixes and indexes. The evidence for localization looks more secure than that for dating, and is mainly a sensible codification of the work of others. Even though Fulk defines his terms with extreme care, the results of the dating tests still suffer from some of the weaknesses of earlier analyses: the numbers of examples involved are sometimes very small, and differ from those given by Amos. The statistics are sometimes stretched to cover a predordained dating that they really do not match: in the section on parasiting, for example, non-parasited forms are 'early', and parasited ones 'late', and the results are said to show that *Exodus* is marginally later than *Beowulf* but earlier than *Andreas* (see p. 348), though the figures clearly show that *Beowulf* is markedly different from the rest of the tested corpus, with many more non-parasited forms than parasited, and *Exodus* and *Andreas* both have many more parasited forms than non-parasited (see p. 83). The 'only exceptions' here are said to be the single non-parasited instances in *Brunanburh* and *Maldon*, in neither of which are there unambiguous verses with parasiting, but they are the most important ones in the table, being the only non-parasited forms in historically datable poems.

As the author says, though, the argument is a cumulative one, and, whilst some of the tests seem to be of marginal use at best, others consistently suggest that *Beowulf* and *Genesis A* are early. The most important contribution that Fulk makes to this subject if his re-examination of Kaluza's Law, which operates in *Beowulf* (as Bliss confirmed), but not elsewhere in the corpus. This rule states that, in positions of secondary stress, resolution is compulsory where the second of two short syllables is historically a short vocalic one, but forbidden when this syllable is etymologically long or consonantal. The quantitative distinction between these two types was lost in primitive Old English, and all phonological distinction was lost in the eighth century. Fulk casts very grave doubt on Bliss's explanation that the poet would have been able to recover this lost phonological distinction after this time through morphological distinctions which remained to the end of the period. If Fulk is right, then *Beowulf* could not have been composed later than the eighth century, and even at that time it would be an unusual matter for the poet to be so very careful about. Those who favour a late date must address this question more rigorously. This is an important book, and a mine of fascinating information on the language and metre of very many Old English poems.

Oxford MARK GRIFFITH

*The Ruthwell Cross: Papers from the Colloquium sponsored by the Index of Christian Art, Princeton University, 8 December 1989*, ed. Brendan Cassidy, Index of

Christian Art, Occasional Papers 1 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992). xiv + 205 pp.; 66 plates. ISBN 0–691–03211–4, £30.00 (hard covers); ISBN 0–691–00038–7, £15.00 (p/b).

The Ruthwell Cross is the most important sculptural monument to survive from early Northumbria. Nevertheless, good photographs of the monument, and an up-to-date bibliography, are hard to come by. This reasonably priced and beautifully produced book supplies this lack, and particular congratulations are due to Katherine Kiefer and Christopher Moss for the pleasing design and excellent copy-editing of the volume. The full, up-to-date and accurate bibliography will be a reference guide for all future work on the monument. It does not, however, amount to a fully satisfying scholarly synthesis.

The bulk of the book is made up of occasional papers, some valuable, others less convincing. The editor gives a useful survey of 'The later life of the Ruthwell Cross: from the seventeenth century to the present'. Also interesting is Douglas MaLean's discussion of 'The date of the Ruthwell Cross'. Like the majority of modern scholars he dates the cross to the second quarter of the eighth century. Following, for example, the work of Rosemary Cramp, he sketches a possible political scenario for the erection of the cross, in the eighth-century Anglo-Saxon thrust westwards along Solway Firth.

The other papers are updated and expanded versions of already-published articles. With the help of Catherine Karkov, Robert T. Farrell provides his second survey of the damage done to the cross, a useful and cautionary study. David Howlett draws together and expands his earlier papers on the inscriptions and design of the cross. Howlett reconstructs the damaged portions of the vernacular poem on the cross, carefully calculating how many runes might have existed in the space available. But when Howlett goes on to argue that the reconstructed text is designed symmetrically, his argument becomes circular: his symmetrical reconstruction depends entirely on his own filling of symmetrical spaces.

In the most ambitious paper in the volume, Paul Meyvaert develops his already-published theory that in the Agnus Dei panel the Lamb is held not by John the Baptist, but by an Apocalyptic figure. This part of his argument is interesting, and perhaps correct. Unfortunately, Meyvaert piles on top of this hypothesis another, that the upper stone should be reversed. His theory depends on the idea of Howlett (1974; repeated here, pp. 73–4), that the Visitation panel on the upper stone actually represents Martha and Mary embracing. But there is no good reason to think that the panel is not a Visitation: even if its runic inscription did include the word 'Martha', the simplest explanation for this is that in the Roman liturgy *c.* AD 700 the Visitation lection was read at Mass on the Nativity of the Virgin (8 September), while the Martha and Mary story was read on the closely associated Dormition of the Virgin (15 August). Association of the two lections on a panel would therefore make that panel more Marian, not less. This Visitation panel continues the Lucan story begun by the Annunciation panel at the foot of the same side of the cross as at present



convincingly reconstructed. Meyvaert's theory is rejected explicitly by Farrell (pp. 45, 47) and implicitly by Howlett himself.

Meyvaert seems not to have read some relevant studies listed in the bibliography. His discussio of the archer panel (pp. 140–5) makes no reference to Barbara Raw (1967; listed p. 191), who first suggested this line of interpretation. He proposes, as though it were new, an interpretation of the Paul and Antony panel on the Nigg stone which corresponds closely to the interpretation published by the present reviewer (1988; listed p. 188). His references to the work of other scholars can be unfairly scathing: he scolds Françoise Henry for giving a 'very misleading' (p. 133) drawing of a Vézelay capital representing Paul and Antony Breaking Bread, before going on to argue that the Vézelay capital which he illustrates (pl. 65) is too realistic to be a Eucharistic symbol. But there are *two* Paul and Antony capitals at Vézelay: Henry provides an accurate drawing of the earlier, from the north aisle; the capital Meyvaert illustrates comes from the Christological façade on the east side of the Narthex. Of the two a stronger argument could be made that the narthex capital occurs in a Eucharistic context. It is reasonable to expect that in a book published by the Princeton Index, and edited by its Director, such lapses might have been corrected.

Meyvaert tries to imagine the place of the cross in a monastic church at Ruthwell: this is useful even if speculative (and dependent on his unconvincing rearrangement of the cross). He uses the Carolingian St. Gall Plan but makes no reference to the Reculver cross, which provides a relevant parallel for an early Anglo-Saxon cross erected within, and near the choir of, a surviving church. Because Meyvaert is convinced that the Ruthwell poem is a later addition (a hypothesis for which he provides no decisive argument) he has nothing to say on the contribution the poem makes to the cross's meaning (he does not see that this question is still relevant even if the poem were added later).

Cork ÉAMONN Ó CARRAGÁIN

*Old English Homilies from MS Bodley 343*, ed. Susan Irvine, Early English Text Society, OS 302 (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the EETS, 1993). lxxviii + 242 pp. ISBN 0–19–722304–4. £20.00.

This lavish edition of seven homilies from twelfth-century MS Bodley 343 supplants that of Belfour. As Ælfric's authorship of the first four homilies has already been established, the main focus of the general introduction is a detailed analysis of the seven sections of the manuscript. Serious attempts are made to answer the problems associated with the transmission, copying and collecting of Old English texts in the twelfth century. The language of the manuscript is also thoroughly studied within the constraints of this edition (p. lv–lxxviii).

Each homily receives a substantial amount of attention in the form of an introduction, notes and abundant source information, the latter conveniently placed beneath the main text. Some of Belfour's emendations have been retained (p. lxxviii n. 1), and when they have not, Dr Irvine provides ample justification for her choices. In the second homily, however, the erroneous

but repeated use of the dative plural, which Dr Irvine attributes to scribal errors, could result rather from the increasing twelfth-century indifference to the grammatical role of inflections (pp. 46–7 nn. 13, 190, 198).

Irvine is most successful both in her integration of the first four homilies within the Ælfrician corpus, and in the presentation of that corpus as the context for the last three. For example, the introduction to the third homily, *The Healing of the Blind Man*, presents a detailed study of Ælfric's handling of his main source, followed by an important discussion on baptism. For the homily named *St Vincent's Day*, Irvine offers a convincing argument for the cult of St Vincent and its English centres, notably suggesting Abingdon as the abbey that commissioned this work.

The last three homilies, *The Temptation of Christ*, *The Transfiguration of Christ* and *The Transience of Earthly Delights*, are all anonymous. These are each derived from Latin sources, which are rigorously discussed in relation to the Old English material. Some interpretative issues obviously deserve more attention (see the notes for *bec* (p. 45.208), and for *mismaky* (p. 65.123) and *spæky* (p. 73.350)).

These quibbles asides, however, this edition merits unreserved praise. My check of *The Servant's Failure to Forgive* revealed no transcription errors. This is a splendid work, which stands as a hallmark of the EETS editorial tradition.

Oxford DENIS RENEVEY

David Dumville, *Liturgy and the Ecclesiastical History of Late Anglo-Saxon England: Four Studies*, Studies in Anglo-Saxon History 5 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press; Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 1992). ix + 193 pp. ISBN 0–85115–331–3. £29.50.

This book is, as the title indicates, a collection of four separate studies. The first two are on kalendars – the kalendar of the Junius Psalter, and the reconstruction of the kalendar of Glastonbury; the last two studies are more general considerations of liturgical books. Historians of the early Middle Ages have in recent years become increasingly interested in liturgy: this book is a further demonstration that larger questions of ecclesiastical history can be usefully addressed with the aid of this superficially intractable material.

One area of common ground in all four studies is the impression that they produce of the centrality of Canterbury in late Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical culture. The first study makes the Junius Psalter a Canterbury book, on the basis of its kalendar, which derives, as Dr Dumville demonstrates, from a text (the 'Hampson' metrical kalendar) which survives in two Christ Church, Canterbury manuscripts. The second addresses the origins of the Leofric Missal, which includes a kalendar written *c.* 970 which has been ascribed to Glastonbury. Dumville demolishes the arguments that have been brought forward, and ends by offering the alternative suggestion that the kalendar of