The Forgotten Early Medieval Artist
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Jaques Guilmain

The Forgotten Early Medieval Artist

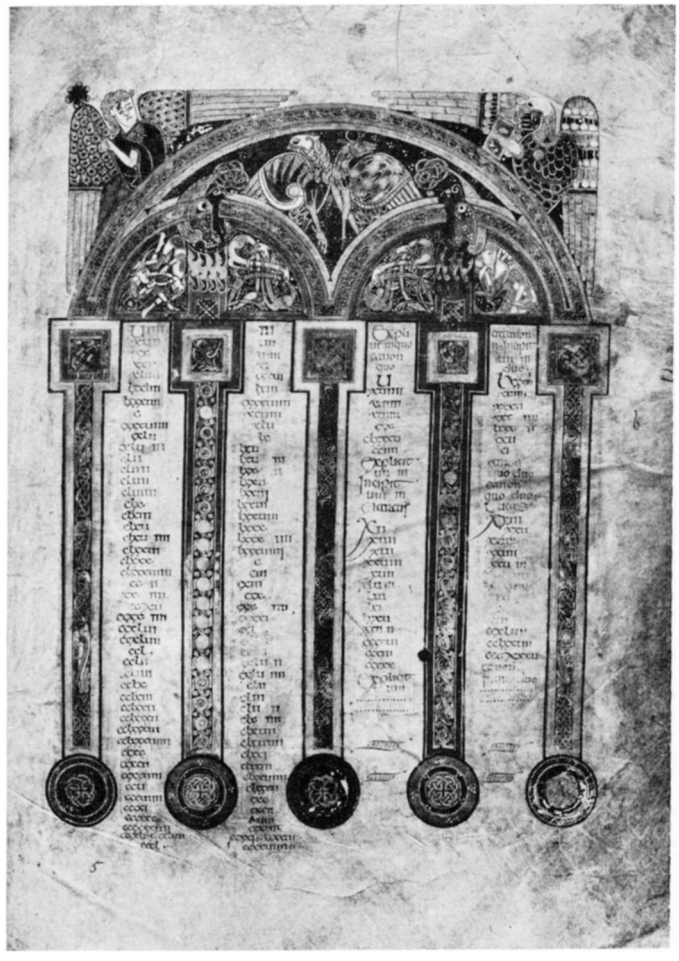

Fig. 1. Dublin, Trinity College Library, Book of Kells, fol. 5r.

Through its often impeccably precise and scientifically objective methodology, art history has immensely enriched our knowledge of past cultures and of man, the creator. But perhaps precisely because the world of the art historian is a well-ordered one, the image of the artist which he has created sometimes appears to be that of a well-behaved clerk carefully recording iconographic traditions, styles, social patterns, art theories, and trends in taste. Such an image has been too often the fate of the early Medieval artist. He has left us no biographies, no theoretical treatises, and no critical works. The art historian, forced to work with the art objects alone, and little or no written collateral material, has had to provide the artist with a hypothetical set of attitudes. However, using these as a basis for the systematic analysis of a given problem may have occasionally led the scholar to compound the confusion inherent in certain questions which were already more than sufficiently complex to begin with. The point that I wish to make here is that the reliance on such a hypothetical set of attitudes as an analytical tool is useful only if it takes a sympathetic view of the artist as an at least often competent professional within the context of a given tradition, and sometimes beyond that as an imaginative creative man. It would obviously not be possible to deal with this question in early Medieval art as a whole in a short article, and I will restrict myself to a few problems in manuscript illumination.

There can be little doubt that the notion of originality as something having validity for its own sake was a foreign one to the early Medieval artist. All our evidence indicates that the artist tended strongly to derive his works from other sources or "models." However, the image of the illuminator as a craftsman strongly susceptible to eclectic tendencies has sometimes been stretched so far as to transform him into a kind of automaton-like copyist, altogether lacking in imagination, who is simply able to reproduce what is placed before him and is literally unable to perform at all without his model. I will discuss below only one example, from many possible ones, where the application of this stereotyped image of the artist-copyist has led to results which have surely complicated rather than simplified the problem under consideration.

In the Book of Kells, there occur two breaks in the schema of the ornamentation of the canon tables, one at

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fol. 3v, where the compositional make-up of the design changes, and one at fol. 5v (**Fig. 2**), where the decoration becomes altogether defective. An explanation of these peculiarities was given many years ago by Professor Friend. According to him, the Kells illuminator was working from a Carolingian model which was decoratively defective after the third canon. Although he does not think much of the artist's ability to compose, Friend does credit him with some technical skill, at least insofar as he is able to make some patchwork substitutions where his model fails him. Thus Friend writes: "Left to his own resources after the model failed, the artist of Kells invented the circular decoration in place of column bases, omitted the beasts altogether on fol. 4v, but supplied them on fol. 5r (**Fig. 1**) as best he could from other sources, thus spoiling his symmetrical ornamental scheme."[1] He goes on to say that the artist may possibly have meant to add the beasts on fol. 4v at a later time, but could not do to because his work was interrupted—as indicated by the break at fol. 5v—by the chaos brought about by the Norse invasion at the beginning of the ninth century of the island of Iona, where he assumes the manuscript was made. The question did not rest there. Friend's ingenious but altogether hypothetical explanation, and particularly the way he used it as partial support of his dating of the Book of Kells in the ninth century, has not been generally accepted.[2] Furthermore, another explanation of the break at fol. 5v has recently been advanced by Patrick McGurk.[3] He concludes that the break is a symptom of the influence of a defective archetype different from the one suggested by Friend, i.e., one decoratively defective after the eighth canon (where the break occurs at fol. 5v in the Book of Kells). McGurk arrives at his conclusion through a comparison of the Kells canon table composition with that of an eighth-century Northumbrian manuscript fragment in the British Museum,[4] the format of which is faulty in the same way. And he writes: "The similarity cannot be due to chance. It suggests two things: that the change in the Kells canons was not due to the disappearance of the artist but to an extreme fidelity to a defective model; and that the defective archetype was also circulating in England, very likely in Northumbria." As one reads this passage, one has a nagging feeling that all is not quite right

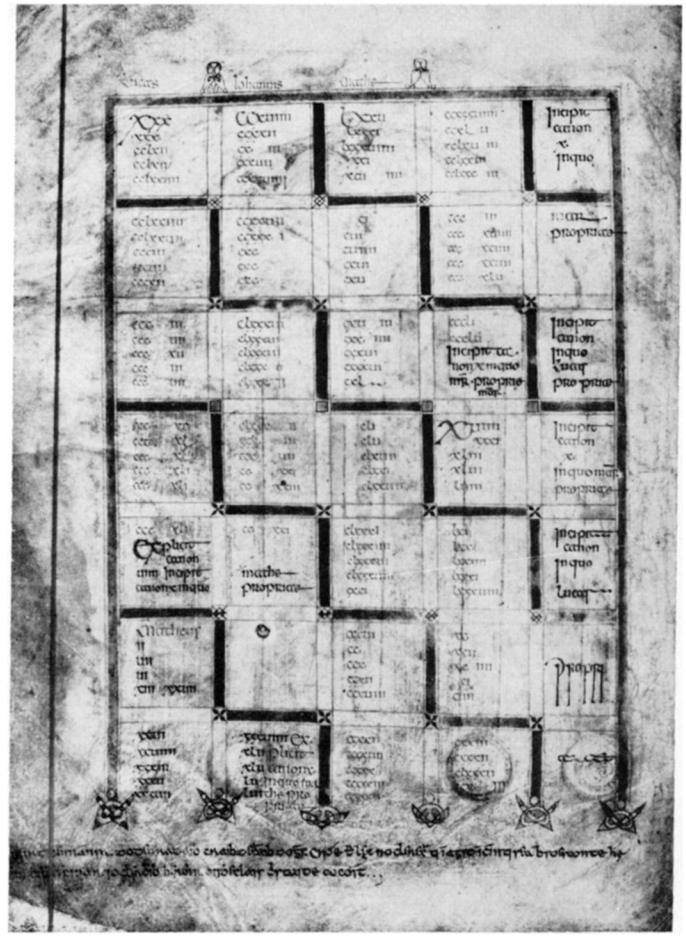

Fig. 2. Dublin, Trinity College Library, Book of Kells, fol. 5v.

with the first part of McGurk's conclusion. Before going into this any further, however, it is necessary to say something about the nature of the research that has been done on the methods used by Insular artists to construct their intricate ornaments. The fundamental work on this problem was done by Romilly Allen, and published in a work which is purely art historical and archaeological in character.[5] The problem was not taken up again from a fresh point of view until much later, then by a Mr. George Bain,[6] an artist and teacher whose interest in Insular ornamentation was motivated not only by his admiration for it, but also for more pragmatic reasons. To Bain, Insular ornamentation was something to be revived and used practically; indeed it was to be used even to decorate manufactured objects. It had therefore to be understood as something which could be taught, and taught not only as something to be copied, but as a system which could be used for the creation of new, original designs. It is hardly possible to discuss here Bain's

[1] *A. M. Friend, Jr., "The Canon Tables of the Book of Kells,"* Medieval Studies in Memory of A. Kingsley Porter *(Cambridge, Mass., 1939), II, p. 617.*

[2] *See, for example, R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford's comment in* The Lindisfarne Gospels *(Bern, Urs Graf-Verlag, 1962), II, p. 254.*

[3] *Patrick McGurk, "Two Notes on the Book of Kells and its Relation to other Insular Gospel Books,"* Scriptorium, *IX (1955), pp. 105–107.*

[4] *Royal 7. C. XII.*

[5] *John Romilly Allen,* Celtic Art in Pagan and Christian Times *(London, 1904).*

[6] *George Bain,* The Methods of Construction of Celtic Art *(Glasgow, 1951).*

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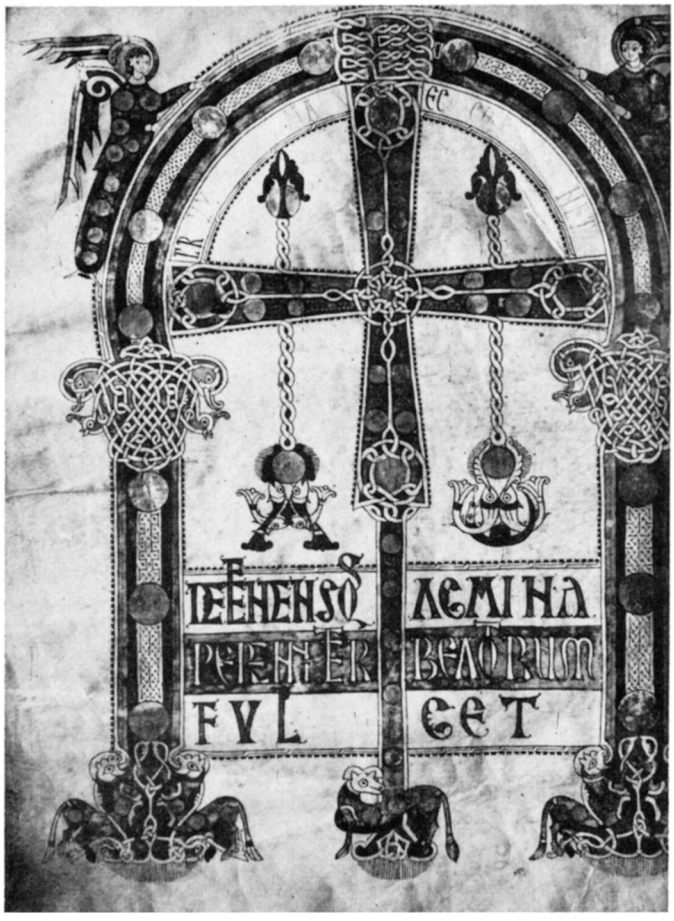

Fig. 3. Escorial, Library of the Royal Monastery, d. I. 1., Codex Aemilianensis, fol. 16v.

painstaking work towards the achievement of his goal; suffice it to say that he was quite successful. In fact he writes proudly: "To the so-called backward pupils, those who had not been taught how to look and those who had failed to understand how to look at three-dimensional things so that they could be represented by copying the visual facts, the Celtic methods brought the joys of creation and permitted the exercising of individual tastes in arrangements, rhythms, colours and uses, often awakening interests in the ordinary representational forms of art that had chief place in examinations. Some of the results from the schools of that period may be seen in the full-page illustrations in the section dealing with modern application of Celtic art."[7] Bain's plates are most revealing. The quaint caption for a picture of a quite respectable design reads: "Designed by girl age 16, based upon motifs from the Book of Kells, etc. embroidered by girls under 14."[8] The flaw in McGurk's argument should now be immediately clear to anyone who compares our **Figs. 1 and 2.** We are asked to believe that the Kells illuminator who designed and probably executed the intricate composition of the canon table on fol. 5r becomes totally helpless when his model becomes defective (why, otherwise, should he be "faithful" to a faulty model?). So much so that he is not even able to execute properly the few little scraps of ornamentation which project sadly from the frame. In other words, according to McGurk the Kells illuminator —when he can no longer simply copy—operates technically and artistically on a level below that exhibited by Mr. Bain's backward girls! But the Book of Kells is in fact unquestionably one of the great creations of Western art.

Its illuminators, working for the most part with a relatively simple vocabulary of ornamental forms and a time-tested grammar of construction methods, were able to fashion a whole series of almost unbelievably intricate and marvelous paintings. There is sufficient variety in the style of the codex to permit the isolation of at least four major artists, each with his own distinct manner, ranging from the fabulously detailed abstractions of the "Goldsmith," to the expressionism of the "Illustrator."[9]

It seems inconceivable that any of these artists, or indeed the meanest of their assistants, would have been unable to produce anything better than the decoration on fol. 5v simply because their model was defective. I should add that there is really no question that work on the Book of Kells was in fact interrupted. There is evidence for this besides the break at fol. 5v. The manuscript's decoration is clearly unfinished. Thus, for example, the schemata of the ornamentation on fols. 30v and 31r were outlined, and on fol. 30v there appears the beginnings of the drawings for an intricate set of interlace-zoomorphic designs. The latter—the heads of a bird and a cat in the upper left-hand corner, and the tail of the bird and legs of the cat twisted together in the lower right-hand corner —are executed with the meticulous care and precision characteristic of the manuscript as a whole.[10] The talented artist who began work on this page never finished it, obviously not because he lacked a model, but for some other reason. And so it appears as if McGurk's argument is considerably weakened.[11] On the other hand, Friend's observation that the break at fol. 5v indicates that work on the codex was suddenly interrupted appears likely to be correct, for all that one may be reluctant to accept the conclusion that he draws from it. It may very well be that we shall never know why the decoration of the

[7] *Ibid., p. 15.*
[8] *Ibid., plate 32.*
[9] *Francoise Henry,* Irish Art in the Early Christian Period *(London, 1940), pp. 144–148.*
[10] *See the Urs Graf-Verlag publication,* The Book of Kells *(Bern, 1951), I.*
[11] *My disagreement with McGurk on this one point should in no sense be taken as a criticism of this exemplary scholar's valuable research work on early Medieval manuscripts.*

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Fig. 4. Escorial, Library of the Royal Monastery, d. I. 2., Codex Vigilanus, fol. 18v.

Book of Kells was never finished.[12] One thing, however seems almost certain. What little decoration there is on fol. 5v could not have been done by one of the original illuminators; it must have been done later by someone who no longer understood the principles of construction of Hiberno-Northumbrian decoration—indeed by someone who, as an artist, could not hold a candle to Mr. Bain's pupils.

I will venture here the opinion that no set rule can really be made regarding the formal approach of early Medieval illuminators. There are certainly instances where an artist seemed to have attempted to make an exact copy of a model, as we will see below. However when the "copy" was made by a truly talented artist the result was really a new work with its own distinctive character. A mature artist who has developed his own mode of working is not likely to be willing or even able

[12] *The illuminations of the Book of Kells constitute an awesome creation. A whole staff of thoroughly organized first-rate artists certainly worked on it for many years. That such an undertaking should have been left partly unfinished is not surprising; the complex organization of the project could simply have broken down just short of its final goal. The intricate Book of Lindisfarne is also unfinished in parts.*

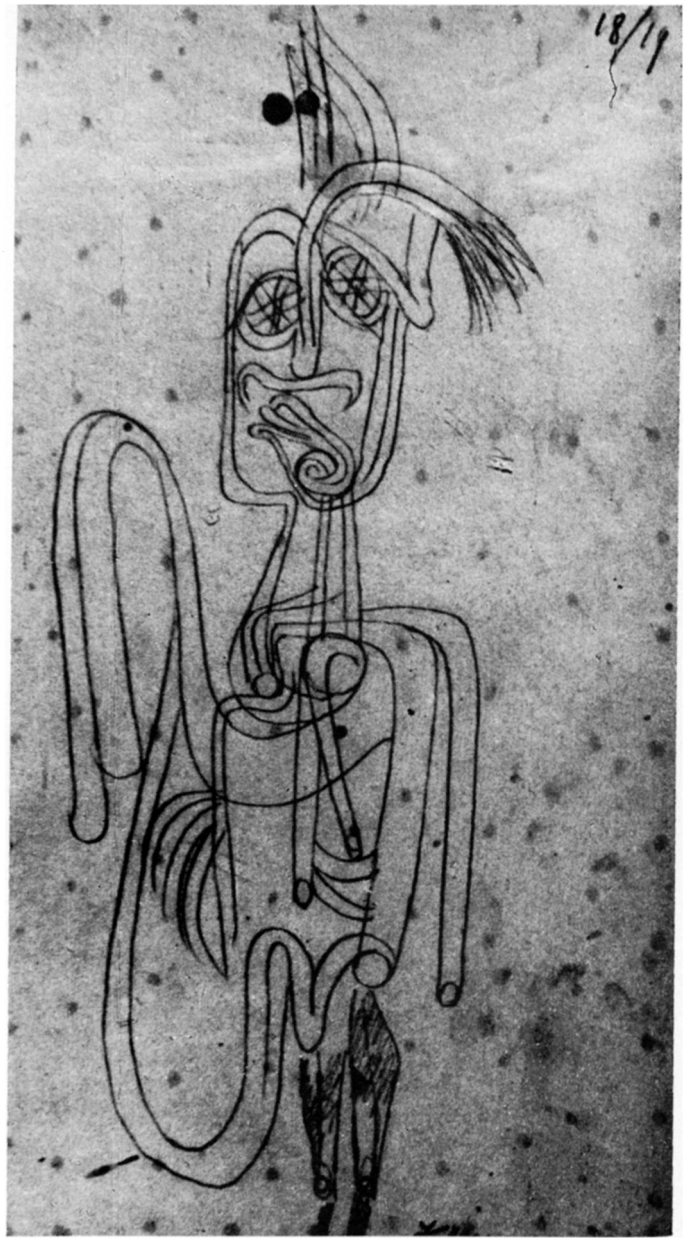

Fig. 5. Paul Klee, Ghost of a Hero, 1918, Klee Foundation, Bern, Switzerland. (Photo: Cosmopress and Spadem by French Reproduction Rights, Inc.)

to change it just to make an exact copy, an achievement usually without meaning in any case. The great variety of scriptorium styles in the early Medieval period attest to the diversity of approaches to artistic problems, for what we call a scriptorium style must actually often represent the personal style of an able and influential master. I will give here a single example from among many possibilities of the more creative copying process which must have been common. The North Spanish *Codex Vigilanus* (Escorial d. I. 2.) was completed in Albelda in the 976. A "copy" of the manuscript was made in the scriptorium of San Millán de la Cogolla and completed in 992 (*Codex Aemilianensis,* Escorial, d. I. 1.).[13] At first an attempt was evidently made to fashion as

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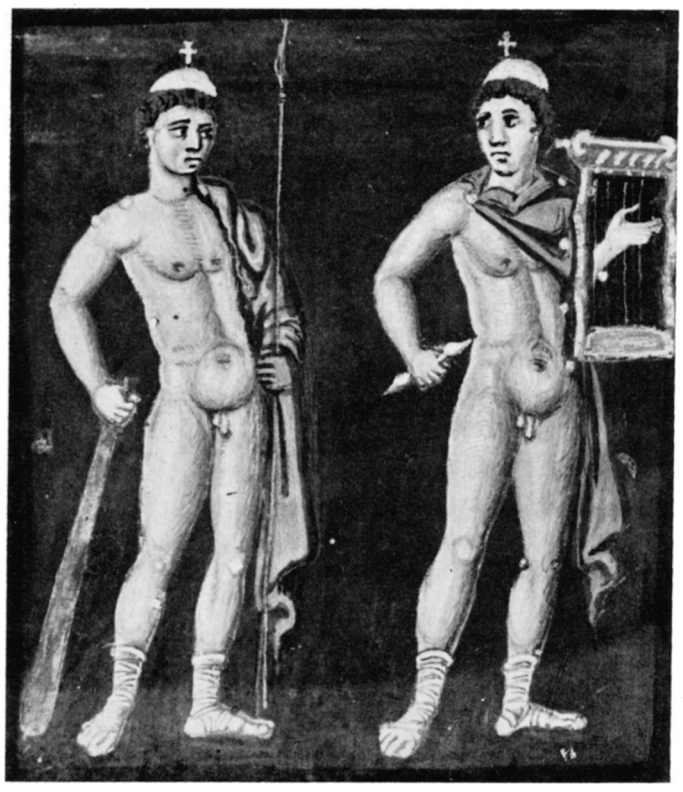

Fig. 6. Leiden, University Library, Codex Vossianus Latinus 79, The Twins.

exact a duplicate of the original as possible, for on fols. 14r and 15r of the *Codex Aemilianensis* there are unfinished miniatures of Adam and Eve, and the Cross of Oviedo which were clearly borrowed unchanged from the *Codex Vigilanus*. However beginning with fol. 15v there is a strong change in the character of the decoration of the later manuscript. Either the same artist who began the copies on fols. 14r and 15r or someone else was unwilling, or unable without pointless effort, to go on being a mere copyist, and thenceforth the paintings are made in the very strikingly dynamic style of San Millán de la Cogolla, or what I believe to have been the style of the Master of its scriptorium. On fol. 15v the artist did over again the Cross of Oviedo; the final product and its model appear in **Figs. 3 and 4.** The *Aemilianensis* illuminator has raised the large cross, framed it within the circular shape defined by the form of the horseshoe arch, lightened its ornamental fabric, and anchored it to the top of the arch, strengthening the latter effect of incorporating the chains from which hang the Alpha and the Omega into the ornamental structure of the cross and attaching them also to the arch. The plant forms flanking the arch in the *Codex Vigilanus* illumination have been eliminated along with the two large animal heads which break up the top of the arch; by substituting for these two angels whose bodies curve to conform to the shape of the arch and a lighter interlace structure which does not project from the frame, the *Aemilianensis* artist restores to the arch the strong sweep of its curve. In addition, he gives equal strength to the three bands of text below the cross, and further stabilizes the composition of the image as a whole by transforming the column bases into wider interlace-zoomorphic plinths. The total design is more stable, lighter—in terms of its coloring as well as the ornamentation—and more lively, though not necessarily better, than the relatively static and heavier *Vigilanus* composition. Thus although the *Aemilianensis* artist has used the *Vigilanus* painting as a model he has created a new image with its own vital character, a new work which is hardly a mere copy.

[13] *On these two manuscripts, consult P. Guillermo Antolín,* Catálogo de los códices latinos de la Real Biblioteca del Escorial *(Madrid, 1910; 1916), I, pp. 320–404, IV, pp. 533–537.*

II

A somewhat questionable image of the early Medieval artist has also been created by scholars who are primarily interested in Renaissance studies and the classical tradition in general. In dealing with this aspect of the problem I am forced to come to grips, and not without trepidation, with that formidable scholar Professor Erwin Panofsky. His exemplary *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*[14] is certainly a model of its kind, and it would be presumptuous for me to criticize it. I wish only to argue that in some respects Panofsky creates, perhaps unwittingly, a somewhat distorted picture of the early Medieval artist, and that one of his followers, in reference to the Carolingian artist, has exaggerated that distortion. Panofsky's work, although rich in nuances, is not a general treatise on the classical tradition, but rather a systematically developed thesis aimed at consolidating the proof of a specific point of view. His work is in fact an answer to those critics of the concept of a Renaissance who have argued that this "rebirth" of classical ideals never really existed, and that the cultural period involved can be understood as a logical development of the Medieval period. In the context of his thesis, Panofsky demonstrates brilliantly that there were indeed renascences in the ninth, twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but that these never really took hold, and differ qualitatively, *as rebirths of the classical tradition,* from the true Renaissance of the fifteenth century. Professor Panofsky is extremely careful to make value judgments only in the light of his main arguments. Nevertheless value judgements, once made, have a tendency to acquire a life of their own, and one may justifiably in that sense question heir absolute validity. Thus as part of his demonstration that the artists of the Carolingian period understood classical figural art better than their predecessors on the Continent, Panofsky quite correctly presents

[14] *Uppsala, 1960.*

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an example of Merovingian figural art, one of the Evangelist figures from the Gundohinus Gospels (Autun, Bibliothèque Municipale, ms. 3), as clearly showing that the artist was unable to cope with the realistic representation of the draped human body. The child-like Gundohinus drawing, although I believe it has some esthetic appeal precisely as a result of its straightforward naive character, is certainly technically deficient, and one could have no bones to pick with Professor Panofsky had he not carried his condemnation of the drawing further in a footnote, and along with that, chastised Erwin Rosenthal who had found that—as Merovingian figural art goes—the Gundohinus miniatures were "expressive."[15] Speaking of the miniatures, Panofsky writes: "To call them 'expressive' would not have been possible before an extremist interpretation of Riegl's *Kunstwollen,* aided and abetted by psychologists and educators, began to treat the art of children and madmen *pari passu* with modes of expression labeled 'primitive' but perfectly adult, sane and even sophisticated."[16] One wonders if the modern art historians who have discovered that certain child-like creations could be expressive if viewed in the proper light are not too rashly condemned. Their evaluation of this type of art is based on more than any interpretation of Riegl's *Kunstwollen;* they have obviously also been profoundly influenced by the works and theoretical writings of 20th century artists. Paul Klee, certainly one of the most sensitive and brilliant of modern painters, received, like most of his contemporaries, the usual academic studio training. Yet the expressiveness of the figural art of his mature years depends on a directness of formal approach which often yielded what seem at first sight to be childish results **(Fig. 5).** Klee's laconic comment on the matter was: "The legend of the childishness of my drawing must have originated from those linear compositions of mine in which I tried to combine a concrete image, say that of a man, with the pure representation of the linear element."[17] I might mention in passing that the words could have come from the mouth of the *Codex Aemilianensis* illuminator in reference to the angels on the arch framing his cross, whose bodies and wings are an arabesque of pure linear fanatasy harmonizing with the rhythm of the composition as a whole **(Fig. 3).** Panofsky goes on to compare the Gundohinus Evangelist figure with several Carolingian ones, including *The Twins* in the Aratus manuscript, *Codex Vossianus Latinus* 79, in the University Library in Leiden. Those figures, he writes, "might have stepped out of a Pompeian mural."[18] Here he implies a value judgment which one is again bound to question somewhat. The manuscript is certainly of the utmost importance from the iconographic point of view, but its figural art as exemplified by *The Twins* **(Fig. 6)** is qualitatively a far cry from the original prototypes. The early Medieval painter was never at his best when it came to the realistic representation of the human figure *per se.* The illumination from the Leiden codex gives the impression of having been made by a skilled artist asked to perform a task which was simply not his cup of tea. The figures are technically lacking and hardly expressive; they are in fact aggravatingly gauche. In his endeavor to create an illusion of volume the artist has carefully executed but overworked his shading. As a result of his lack of understanding of human anatomy he has constructed figures which appear to be badly-made rubber dolls. The attempt to articulate the left figure in a classical *contrapposto* falls flat because the artist has no grasp of the

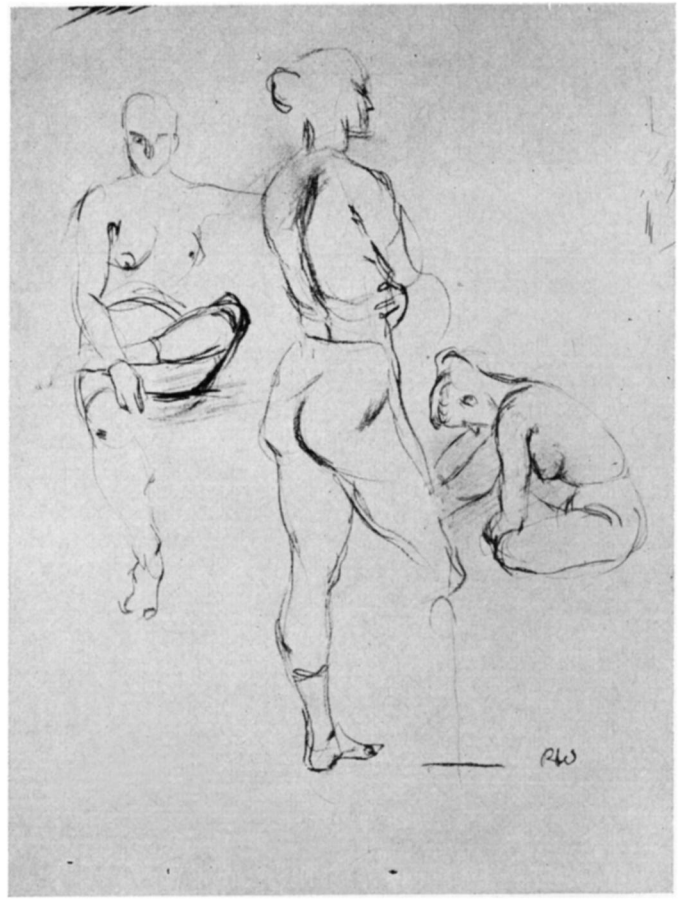

Fig. 7. Robert White, Life Sketches (5-minute poses), ca. 1950.

[15] *Erwin Rosenthal, "Classical Elements in Carolingian illustration,"* Bibliofilia, *LV (1953), p. 87.*

[16] Op. cit. *pp. 48–49, n. 3. For an excellent résumé of Riegl's use of the concept of* Kunstwollen, *see Otto J. Brendel, "Prolegomena to a Book on Roman Art,"* Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome, *XXI (1953), pp. 23–27.*

[17] *Paul Klee,* On Modern Art, *introduction by Herbert Read (London, 1947), p. 53.*

[18] Op. cit., *p. 49.*

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Fig. 8. Vienna, Schatzkammer (Kunsthistorisches Museum), Gospel Book of Charlemagne (The Coronation Book), fol. 76v.

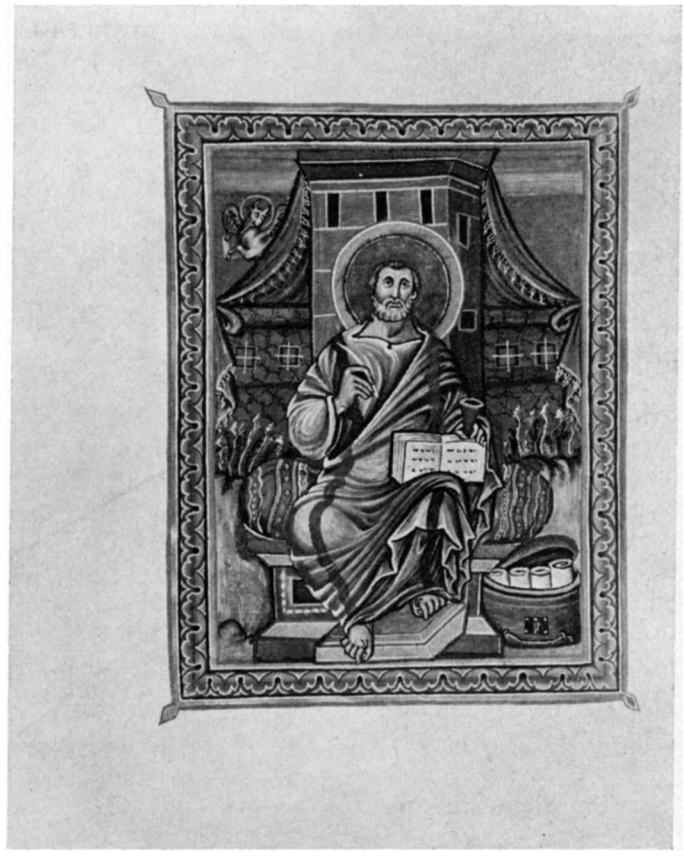

Fig. 9. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, ms. 728, fol. 94v.

mechanism by which the various parts of the body adjust to movement in other parts. He inclines both the shoulders and hips along the same axis—probably in an awkward attempt to show that the figure is leaning—but instead of achieving the graceful S curve so marvelously mastered later by Gothic artists, he manages only to make it appear as if the figure were about to topple backward. The figures are unpleasantly proportioned and otherwise uninteresting. To the best of my knowledge Pompeian art generally tended to be quite superior to this. Benjamin Rowland, Jr., in his book, *The Classical Tradition in Western Art*,[19] continues Panofsky's discussion of the Leiden manuscript figures. He acknowledges that the artist's understanding of nature is limited to what he could see in his model—which was itself certainly an earlier copy of a classical archetype[20]—and that the figures are manikin-like. Nevertheless he writes in reference to the figures: "They are modeled in a truly statuesque fashion, and their rich colors flecked with milky highlights recall the mode of the Augustan age."[21] It may be that the Leiden manuscript figures are ultimately related to Pompeian paintings of the type illustrated by the *Theseus Triumphant over the Minotaur* in the Naples Archaeological Museum, as Rowland observes, but the loss in quality in the Carolingian codex is only too painfully evident.[22] Correct modeling of the nude figure does not depend on shading alone, particularly of the overworked type found in the Leiden manuscript figures, but also on the properly composed movement of the body contours on the two-dimensional surface, a principle thoroughly understood by the better Pompeian mural painters. To depict the nude body realistically and expressively requires a sound knowledge of the anatomy of skeleton and muscles, and many years of practice on the drawing board. It is this knowledge and experience that makes it possible for the properly trained draughtsman of any period to create the illusion of a living and breathing human form with a few strokes of the drawing tool on a two-dimensional surface, and without relying on shading *per se* at all (**Fig. 7**).[23] The early Medieval artist dealing with the human figure is not at his best when he attempts to work as if had this fundamen-

[19] *Cambridge, Mass., 1963.*
[20] *On this, see Rosenthal, p. 85.*
[21] *Rowland, p. 105.*
[22] Ibid., *plate 35.*
[23] *I am indebted to my colleague Professor Robert White for allowing me to reproduce the drawing in Fig. 7.*

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tal technical expertness, but is more effective when he attempts to create an expressive image through other means, despite the fact that he does not have it. No one would question the quality of the Evangelist figures in the Vienna Schatzkammer Gospel Book (**Fig. 8**). These figures, writes Professor Panofsky, "give an impression so deceptively antique that they have been ascribed to artists from Byzantium; so vigorous is the modeling of the bodies beneath their white draperies, so gracefully are they posed on front of what has been called impressionistic landscapes."[24] But here, as is often the case in early Medieval painting, the hand of the artist is quicker than the eye of the spectator. The body of the Evangelist in our illustration is modeled beneath the drapery in actually only the most rudimentary fashion. What the artist has really done is to juxtapose a series of flat planes of darks and lights in such a clever way that they create a flickering effect of in-and-out movements on the picture plane, and therefore an illusion of depth—an effect not unsimilar to that achieved by Picasso and Braque in their Cubist paintings of the analytical phase. The active, flecked landscape elements which surround the figure may be imagined as being behind it, but actually they are stated in terms of irregular outlines which anchor the halo of the figure to the frame. The masterfully illusionistic effect of this painting is due to the skillful artist's deft handling of brushwork and, from an esthetic point of view, the expressiveness of the painting depends essentially on the inventiveness of the variety of line contours, variety of flat planes, and not really on any sort of classical modeling. The vitality of the image is enhanced by the activity of the plant decoration in the frame. The effectiveness of this ornament lies primarily in its rhythmical movement, which is organized in very much the same manner as the interlace and interlace-zoomorphic ornaments of insular manuscripts and their Continental variants (**Fig. 11**).[25] There is no reason why the painting could not have been executed by a miniaturist of the first rank who had been trained in the Merovingian and Insular traditions of decoration, and who has taken some pains to study models derived from antique sources, reacted to them favorably, and assimilated them to his own mode of working. The style of the illumination certainly does not require the introduction of that *deus ex machina* of the art historian, the imported artist, to be explained away.[26] In the painting from a Reims manuscript illustrated in **Fig. 9**, the virtually flat architectural backdrop is attached to the frame, defines the picture plane, and pushes the figure forward as if it were on front of it; the swirling folds of the robe, al-

Fig. 10. Pierpont Morgan Library, ms. 728, fol. 95r.

though they superficially create an illusion of volume, really move back and forth as surface elements. To Professor Panofsky, the most "progressive" masters of the Carolingian period were those who "attempted to do justice to the human body as an organism subject to the laws of anatomy and physiology, to space as a three-dimensional medium. . . ."[27] But one wonders if this is an

[24] Op. cit. *p. 49.*

[25] *Some of my analyses of Carolingian illuminations are based in parts on Professor Meyer Schapiro's penetrating lectures on these works at Columbia University.*

[26] *The evidence other than stylistic for assigning the Schatzkammer Gospel Book paintings and related illuminations to Byzantine artists is inconclusive (see, for example, Panofsky, p. 49, note 1, and Carl Nordenfalk, in* Early Medieval Painting, *Lausanne, 1957, p. 114. Rowland (p. 103) assumes that Byzantine artists must have been involved, and he writes that "the vital Hellenistic spirit of works like the Gospel Book of Charlemagne cannot be explained by the mere presence of ancient models as an inspiration for the craftsmen attached to the Emperor's court." But to make a strong case for assigning these Carolingian paintings to Byzantine artists on stylistic grounds might in the end become embarrassing, for it would require also an explanation of why so many compositional elements—and often basic ones—usually associated with Merovingian and Insular art came to be part of these artists' formal vocabulary.*

[27] Op. cit., *p. 48.*

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Fig. 11. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 2, Second Bible of Charles the Bald, fol. 11r. (Photo B.N.)

entirely correct evaluation of the attitude of the artists of the time. Carolingian painters never really understood these laws, and, as I have argued above, their work when they are effective are so despite the fact that they did not. Panofsky does not seem to be judging the artists on what they did, but rather on what he assumes they were trying to do. It is undoubtedly true that the introduction of classical imagery into their formal repertory was an exciting development for the Carolingian artists, and resulted in a vital reevaluation of their esthetic approach. But it does not follow from this that classical art therefore became for them consistently better than what they knew already, and that the fundamental reference to the imitation of nature which was the underlying principle on which their models were structured was something to be searched out from beneath their surface appearance. Indeed, figural painting of "classical" derivation and initial pages in which classical and Insular motifs are freely mixed appear often in the same manuscript, and are given equal emphasis (**Figs. 9 and 10**).[28] One of the most vital expressions of the Carolingian Renaissance appears in the Vienna Schatzkammer Gospel Book and manuscripts related to it. Referring to the miniatures in these codices, Dr. Nordenfalk writes: "Thus the style based solely on linear plastic elements that characterized the Ada manuscripts is now replaced by an essentially painterly technique, color and light being intimately associated as in the pictorial art of Hellenistic and Roman antiquity."[29] This is, of course, entirely correct, but the painterly character of the Carolingian miniatures differs in one fundamental way, I believe, from that of their archetypes. Even in the evangelist portrait on purple vellum in the Bibliothèque Royale in Brussels, reproduced by Nordenfalk—which is stylistically related to the Vienna Gospel Book miniatures—the brushwork strongly suggests a weaving grouping of strokes on a two-dimensional surface, and the rhythm of their movement is strongly reminiscent of interlace design. The fully developed formal principle apparent in the Brussels Evangelist figure crystalizes in the miniatures of the famous Utrecht Psalter. There, I believe, the antique painterly technique is purely residual. Brushstrokes are transcribed back into lines organized as pulsating rhythms weaving back and forth across the flat surfaces, and the frenzied "illusionistic" efforts never penetrate the picture plane.[30]

III

Rowland, paraphrasing out of context part of Panofsky's work writes: "As Panofsky has pointed out, one of the greatest contributions of the Carolingian renaissance was the reinstatement of the old gods, each authentically antique in pagan content and artistic form."[31] That may be. But it seems a sad epitaph for the Carolingian miniaturist as an artist that one of his greatest contributions should be judged to be that he passed on for posterity some inexpressive copies of second-hand images of the pagan gods. There was always more to the classical tradition than a tendency towards an idealized realism and the acceptance of an ancient repertory of subject matter. In another sense, what the classical artist

[28] *The Morgan Library manuscript, miniatures from which are reproduced in Figs. 9 and 10, was made in Reims during the archbishopric of Hincmar. See Frederick M. Carey, "The Scriptorium of Reims during the Archbishopric of Hincmar (845–882 A.D.),"* Classical and Mediaeval Studies in Honor of Edward Kennard Rand *(1958), pp. 41–60. On the influence of Insular ornamentation on Continental art of the early Medieval period, see Genevieve L. Micheli,* L'Enluminure du haut moyen age et les influences irlandaises *(Brussels, 1939).*

[29] *In* Early Medieval Paintings, *p. 143.*

[30] Ibid., *plates on p. 141 and p. 143. Hanns Swarzenski, in "The Xanten Purple Leaf and the Carolingian Renaissance,"* The Art Bulletin, *XXII (1940), pp. 7–24, has argued that the Evangelist figure on purple vellum is not a Carolingian work, but an early Christian one. Despite its forcefulness, his thesis is unconvincing and has not been widely accepted.*

[31] Op cit., *p. 105.*

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sought in nature was not only forms to be imitated, but also a logical and harmonious order. This more abstract aspect of the classical tradition, with its insistence on the precise relationship of parts to each other and to the whole, on clarity, restraint, and harmony of proportions was something to which some Carolingian artists were clearly sensitive.

There is kept in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris what is certainly one of the most monumental creations of Carolingian art, the manuscript lat. 2, or Second Bible of Charles the Bald. The illumination reproduced here illustrates the style of the codex as a whole (**Fig. 11**). The design is a delicate equilibrium of impeccably constructed elements. The refined unity of the painting is also evident in the splendid coloring of the page, in which gold leaf, used in the Roman capitals, the large ribbons of the interlace initials and those of the frame, harmonize the apparently divergent character of these elements. The artist has carefully taken into account in his composition the structural value of the precisely-defined negative spaces on the two-dimensional surface. Indeed, the whole design is a supremely successful exercise in compositional logic and clarity. The illuminator of the Second Bible of Charles the Bald has achieved a breathtaking classical grandeur without depending on images of the pagan gods, or for that matter on any representation of the human form. From his studies of Hiberno-Northumbrian ornamentation he had learned to discipline his hand to the most stringent requirements of spacing and rhythm; and the structural and spacial clarity which is so much a trademark of the classical tradition is inherent in the very fabric of the antique script which he understood so well.[32]

Purely in terms of his talent as an artist of the first rank, and within the context of an approach to the classical tradition in early Medieval illumination which concerned itself with more art and less matter, the Master of the Second Bible of Charles the Bald could never be forgotten.[33]

[32] *For a description of the Second Bible of Charles the Bald, a Franco-Saxon manuscript of the third quarter of the ninth century, see Philippe Lauer,* Bibliothèque Nationale, catalogue général des manuscrits latins *(Paris, 1939), L, p. 2. The illuminations of the Bible are reproduced in the Bibliothèque Nationale's publication,* Peintures et initiales de la Seconde Bible de Charles le Chauve *(Paris, 1911). See also Nordenfalk,* op. cit., *p. 154.*

[33] *I am indebted to the following libraries and museums for providing me with the photographs reproduced above: The Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, the Kunsthistorische Museum in Vienna, the library of the Escorial, the University Library in Leiden, Trinity College Library in Dublin, and the Klee Foundation in Bern.*

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CAA ANNUAL MEETING

The program of papers to be read at the 1966 meeting of the College Art Association of America to be held in New York, N.Y., on January 27, 28, and 29, 1966, is now being prepared. Anyone who is interested in reading a paper on the history of art at one of the sessions is requested to submit the title and a brief resume of the paper to the Chairman of the appropriate session as listed below. Suggestions for papers for the artists-teachers sessions should be submitted directly to Mr. Joseph McCullough, Director,The Cleveland Institute of Art, 11141 East Boulevard, Cleveland 6, Ohio. Naturally all the papers suggested will not be able to be read at the conference, as there will undoubtedly be too many suggestions in some areas or a suggested paper may not fit into a particular theme which the Session Chairman may develop. However, it is the desire of the Session Chairmen to have as rich as possible a selection of subjects from which to choose an excellent program.

WALTER W. HORN
JOSEPH MCCULLOUGH
Co-Chairmen of the 1966 Program

SESSIONS

Roman Art—Prof. Otto Brendel, Columbia University
Near Eastern Art—Prof. Oleg Grabar, University of Michigan
Byzantine Art—Prof. Ernst Kitzinger, Center for Byzantine Studies, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, Washington
Mediaeval Art—Prof. Robert Branner, Columbia University
Renaissance Art—Prof. Millard Meiss, The Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton
Baroque Art—Prof. Seymour Slive, Fogg Museum of Art, Harvard University
American Art—Prof. William I. Homer, Cornell University
Oriental Art—Prof. John Max Rosenfield, Fogg Museum of Art, Harvard University
Art, Government and the Artist—Mr. Kenneth Hudson, Washington University
Tradition and the Avant-Garde in Contemporary Art—Mr. Edward B. Henning, Cleveland Museum of Art

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