

**RECONSIDERING TUSK AND BONE:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE FORMS, FUNCTIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF
ANGLO-SAXON IVORIES, c.500-1066**

Three Volumes, Vol. I

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Abstract

It is the purpose of this thesis to reconsider the ivories of early medieval England with an in-depth analysis drawing on various disciplinary approaches. The last *extensive* published scholarly work on these ivories was that produced over forty years ago by John Beckwith (*Ivory Carvings in Early Medieval England*, 1972). Since then there has been little in the way of scholarly investigation of these objects beyond occasional studies of individual ivories in the form of articles or as entries in catalogues of museum collections – or even more rarely, as a passing mention within monographs on Anglo-Saxon art in general.

While Beckwith's publication was, by comparison, comprehensive in its coverage, there were, nevertheless, some ivories that were not included – in some cases because they have come to light since 1972. Generally speaking, however, the scholarly trend has been to consider the ivories of Anglo-Saxon England *only* in relation to continental workshops (namely, Carolingian, Merovingian or Italian centres of production), and most discussions of them has been from a formalist art historical point of view, concentrating on style rather than materiality or iconography. Such approaches fail to acknowledge the full potential of the ivories.

To remedy this situation, this thesis will situate the publication and collection of Anglo-Saxon ivories between 1850-2015 as a means of explaining the nature of the scholarship as it exists today. This will be followed by chapters that first, examine the materiality, archaeology, economic footprint and social/cultural perception of ivory in early medieval England; second, re-assess the (potentially Anglo-Saxon) style of the ivory carvings; and third, that considers the iconographic significances of the carvings in order to situate them within the ecclesiastical milieu from which they emerged. In closing, these approaches will be brought together to examine the perceptions of value invested in the ivories – through their embellishments (precious metals and stones) and the iconography of the material of ivory in Anglo-Saxon England and the wider medieval world.

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- 6.21** Zoomorphic Disc (cat. 49), walrus ivory disc mounted on a copper alloy sheet with traces of heavy gilding, early eleventh century. London, British Museum: 1987,0305.1.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis, and the research on which it is based, is my own work. Where reference is made to the works of others, the extent to which that work has been used is indicated and duly acknowledged in the text and bibliography.

This work has not been already accepted in substance for any degree, nor is it being concurrently submitted in candidature at any other university, or for any other degree.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCING THE IVORIES OF ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

1.1 Aims and Objectives

It has been over forty years since John Beckwith published his study of the ivory carvings of early medieval England. His 1972 monograph, and subsequent exhibition in 1974 were, in a nutshell, the last time any scholar, museum curator or attentive public eye was focused on the ivories of Anglo-Saxon England as a discrete group. The only mention made since 1972 has been in catalogues, a remark or two in wider studies on Anglo-Saxon art generally, or within short articles. This pattern has long been the norm, and Beckwith's monograph itself followed a well-established tradition of publications dedicated to a large group of objects linked by medium that focused on their place within the wider artistic milieu in which they were created; it was, however, the first (and only) one devoted to the ivories of Anglo-Saxon England.¹ Given the advances made in the last forty years in our understanding of technological, methodological, archaeological and art historical issues relating to ivory, it is clear that the ivories of early medieval England need to be reconsidered, and in the process, hopefully, highlighted as an art form deserving of more consideration and inclusion in the scholarship. The purpose of this study, therefore, aims to build on the work of previous scholars, and bring an as yet unused multi-disciplinary approach to the extant Anglo-Saxon ivories of *c.*500-1066.

1.2 The Argument

This will be achieved by, first,² contextualising the previous scholarship within the wider art historical and generalized studies on Anglo-Saxon art since the earliest studies on such subjects in the mid eighteenth century, therefore demonstrating that interest in the ivories of Anglo-Saxon England has fluctuated within the wider scholarly setting, itself reflecting art historical methodological trends more broadly. Early publications on the ivories are now seen as antiquarian and not, generally speaking, considered to be of the same scholarly standard as the later, more 'academic' texts of the twentieth and twenty-first

¹ Other such examples that likely inspired Beckwith include: Koechlin, 1906; Dalton, 1909; Gardner, 1935; Hinks, 1962; Saxl, 1954.

² See Chapter 2.

centuries – by scholars such as Vöge, Goldschmidt, Longhurst, Beckwith, Williamson, Neuman de Vegvar and Webster whose work (albeit offering widely differing opinions),³ were produced against the background of broader discussions of Anglo-Saxon art; and studies of other media, by writers such as Baldwin Brown, Kendrick, Kitzinger, Dodwell, Hawkes and Gannon (to name but a very few).⁴ Within these publications, on subjects such as Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture, manuscript illumination and metalwork, the ivories tend (with few exceptions) to be either ignored or effectively dismissed with only a brief mention. It is not the aim here to denigrate or criticise such methodologies, but rather to situate such attitudes within a wider trend of published perspectives. By means of this historiographic review, it will be seen that authors were (unsurprisingly) influenced by the work of preceding generations of scholars; it was this that seems to have resulted in, and perpetuated, a general apathy for further study into the ivories of Anglo-Saxon England.

Bucking this general trend, however, was a series of publications that presented a different perspective into the general perception of the ivories. From the mid-eighteenth century those ivories fortunate enough to come to the attention of early modern English collectors would become part of the founding collections of three major institutions in England: namely, the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool, and the British Museum and the Victoria & Albert Museum in London (hereafter, V&A). A combination of national legislation (providing the impetus of building museums for public benefit), large international exhibitions (such as that of 1851), key public and royal benefactors (like Prince Albert, Henry Cole, Augustus Franks and many others) as well as a keen nationalistic attitude towards collecting artistic objects produced a positive atmosphere in regards to the collection and display of early medieval ivories. Admittedly, the ivories displayed were not always labelled as Anglo-Saxon or even English; the preference (as in ‘academic’ circles) was to connect the ivories with the artistic centres of Northern Europe and the Mediterranean, rather than acknowledge any ‘barbaric’ influences.

Clearly, it is the combined effect of these lines of scholarly enquiry that has resulted in the current tendency to downplay the early medieval ivories of England. Yet, while this background is necessary to understanding current scholarly trends and their

³ Vöge, 1900; Goldschmidt, 1914-26; Longhurst, 1926, 1927; Beckwith, 1964, 1972; Williamson, 2010; Neuman de Vegvar, 1991; Webster, 2012.

⁴ Brown, 1903-37; Kendrick, 1938, 1949; Kitzinger, 1940b; Dodwell, 1982; Hawkes, 1999, 2014a; Gannon, 2003.

methodological approaches, subjects that will be further considered here,⁵ it is also necessary – and indeed central to this study – to consider the material of the ivories, and contemporary attitudes to their materiality, as such objects were not carved in a vacuum but rather were part of a larger bone carving trend. The volume of domesticated animal bones that have been found on archaeological sites, both in carved and uncarved states, is overwhelming when compared to this study of a relatively small sample of fifty-seven ivory and whalebone objects, however seeing as bone (and ivory) was used on all aspects of life (secular and ecclesiastic), the importance of the practice itself cannot be understated. The ability for carvers to create “monumental” art in small, handheld bone and ivory objects was vital for the relation and dissemination of secular and ecclesiastical ideals and messages, and likely acted as a catalyst for many iconographic and stylistic trends that swept the country across the centuries. While the surrounding practice of bone carving is important for placing ivory carving within Anglo-Saxon England, this study will focus on ivory and whalebone carving alone.⁶

In saying this, such carving, especially the ivory carving, would become a large part of early medieval maritime and in-land trade,⁷ which will demonstrate the role of luxury trade and opportunistic access to ivory and ivory-like materials that were circulating in Anglo-Saxon England: namely, elephant tusk, whalebone and walrus tusk. Analysis of the extant carved and archaeological remains of Anglo-Saxon ivory will provide a chronology of the appropriation at market (or otherwise), of these materials and their use within artistic and utilitarian circles, as well as their re-use or abandonment. This will demonstrate that the animals, their tusks and bones, and the objects made from them, played a much wider role in Anglo-Saxon culture and society than has been previously acknowledged. Luxury trade and gift-giving, legend and perceptions of value articulated in oral and written traditions, as well as the ways in which the ivory itself played a role in perpetuating its own value and existence in all levels of society, will allow for a greater understanding of ivory as an artistic and utilitarian medium and an economic marker of secular and ecclesiastical wealth in the Anglo-Saxon period.

⁵ See Chapters 4 and 5.

⁶ For more extensive publications on bone carving in Anglo-Saxon England, see the bibliography but especially: Cottrill, 1935; MacGregor, 1985; Gardiner, 1997; MacGregor, Mainman & Rogers, 1999; Choke & Bartosiewicz, 2001; Claire, 2003; Luik, et. al., 2005.

⁷ See Chapter 3.

With this understanding of how the Anglo-Saxon ivories *have* been studied (Chapter 2), and how they *might* be studied (Chapter 3), the following chapters will examine what has been, over the last two centuries, the main means by which the ivories of early medieval England have been explained: by means of their style and iconography. It is by means of these approaches, in both generalised studies as well as catalogue entries, that the Anglo-Saxon ivories have been almost exclusively analysed, with most discussions taking the form of (often disparaging) remarks on their imitation and appropriation of continental motifs. The aim here is to reassess these perceptions, acknowledging the ‘influence’ of continental artistic centres (asserted by previous scholars), but in turn also demonstrating that such processes do not negate the possibility (even probability) of Anglo-Saxon provenance, especially when considered against the general context of the arts in Anglo-Saxon England.

This said, the provenance of a number of the ivories has been uncontested and the means by which an Anglo-Saxon origin has been established, stylistically, sheds light on the larger group of ivories whose provenance (and date) has been contested. Consideration of the stylistic conventions shared by both groups demonstrates that they are perhaps better viewed as reflecting the established cross-cultural (and cross-Channel) connections flourishing within the arts of *c.*500–1066. The core of this discussion,⁸ will thus address in three chronological sections the contested ivories of Anglo-Saxon England in connection with what has been almost universally accepted as three specifically Anglo-Saxon stylistic motifs: namely, framework, zoomorphic interlace and a stiff, hierarchical figural style.

Beginning with the late eighth- and early ninth-century ivories, the unique, often singular, expressions of stylistic conventions displayed by the carvings, are seen as betraying an awareness of motifs circulating across early medieval Europe while engaging with the expanding power and influence of the early Church in Anglo-Saxon England, as well as localised vernacular interests. Moving on to the mid ninth- and tenth-century ivories, by far the smallest group of contested ivories, it will nevertheless be seen that while aware of stylistic conventions circulating on the Continent, the artists of this period working in Anglo-Saxon England were capable of invoking styles that not only indicated their broader knowledge of artistic trends, but also their own technical ability in creating compositions that furnish a real sense of localised theological and exegetical themes

⁸ Chapter 4.

circulating at the time. During a period of heightened artistic activity, due largely to royal and ecclesiastical flow and counter-flow between the courts of Charlemagne and Offa, and those of Charlemagne's heirs and Alfred, it is not surprising to see that these ninth- and tenth-century ivories have engendered contentious arguments about their provenance; with that in mind, it will be argued here that these carvings were distinct expressions of such international connections, articulated as responses to (rather than influenced by, or as an appropriation of) the relationships created and artistic knowledge shared between the Anglo-Saxons and their European counterparts. Among the contested ivories of the late tenth to mid eleventh centuries is a small group that has consistently attracted contending opinions; the remaining (large) group of late Anglo-Saxon ivories has, by contrast, been nearly exclusively overlooked in the scholarship, apparently as a result of the extensive interest in contemporary continental output as well as the proliferation of repeated iconographic schemes (which will be discussed more fully in Chapter 5).

By this means, previous scholarship, often based on what appears to be a general lack of awareness of Anglo-Saxon art and its varied stylistic expressions (as a result of a widespread lack of engagement in the canon of Art History with this type of early medieval art overall), is readdressed. Furthermore, the tendency to dismiss the possibility of Anglo-Saxon craftsmanship because of the *individuality* of the ivories is brought into question: as Hawkes has argued in relation to the early sculpture of the region, the very singularity of Anglo-Saxon artistic expression perhaps gives more credence to an Anglo-Saxon provenance.⁹

Building on these observations the iconography of the ivories will be re-considered, and perhaps provide a better sense of their 'Anglo-Saxon-ness' due to their apparent 'precocious' tendencies and wide ranging artistic expression that was emphasized in their creative production. While pagan subjects are difficult to argue as being purely 'Anglo-Saxon', with the Christian iconography this is less of a problem, and indeed, it has produced a wealth of scholarly publications, albeit highlighting the 'barbaric' and 'un-refined' nature of Anglo-Saxon iconographic expression in general. The sources from which the artists of early medieval Britain and Ireland took their inspiration have (according to much of the scholarship) relied *entirely* on continental and Mediterranean compositions and motifs, but it will be argued here that due to the cross-Channel and

⁹ Hawkes, 2011: 230-42, 374-79.

cross-cultural nature of Anglo-Saxon society, the Anglo-Saxon carvers were, like other artists of the time, responding to (as opposed to appropriating and reproducing) the arts to which they had access, and re-articulating their sources in keeping with their own perceived needs. Ultimately it will be seen that previous scholarship has created a dichotomy between Continental (i.e. Carolingian, Mediterranean, etc.) and Anglo-Saxon artistic work; my arguments will demonstrate that this is a false dichotomy, dealing directly with the assumption that although some iconography and stylistic trends found in the ivories are in keeping with specifically Continental and/or Anglo-Saxon artistic production, this does not mean that these pieces are indeed products of either artistic centre separately, but rather allude directly to the cross-Channel traffic that was occurring throughout the entire early medieval period.

As in Chapter 4, the Christian iconography of the ivories will be examined chronologically in Chapter 5, however it must be noted that an undertaking of the iconographic analysis of any period is substantive enough to produce a new doctoral thesis on its own, therefore the discussion here will act as an overview, suggesting the value and future potential for more in-depth study, rather than being an exhaustive investigation. It will be demonstrated that the eighth- and ninth-century ivories responded iconographically to the teachings of the early Church in the region, while the later ninth- and tenth-century pieces, while revealing iconographic differences with their earlier counterparts, display the influence of current, and localised theological, liturgical and exegetical publications, opening up the variety of motifs presented and so indicating that those responsible for their production were well-educated in both the Word and Image.¹⁰ The largest part of the discussion of the iconography of the ivories examines those emerging from the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. This will reveal the effects of the Benedictine Reform on the artists and patrons of the carvings. This is perhaps best seen in the overwhelming preponderance of a very few iconographic schemes: the Crucifixion, Christ in Majesty and the Virgin Enthroned. Together these comprise nearly half of all the extant ivories of this entire study. Their production during the period of ecclesiastical reform is highly significant given that the iconography of the vast majority of the earlier ivories emphasises scriptural narrative rather than the almost iconic presentation of figures of Christ or the

¹⁰ The implication here is that there was an awareness of scripture as well as iconographic representations of the word of God.

Virgin. While the earlier ivories appear to display specific and individual iconographies chosen as part of a wider concern with biblical narrative, the reformist attitudes of the late tenth- to mid eleventh-century seem to display greater concerns with devotion, obedience, salvation and spiritual dedication inspired by ‘portraits’ rather than diverse iconographic narrative scenes. This is not to say that there was no variety: while generalised expressions of a Triumphant Christ, the Virgin, or the Crucified Christ are the three image types favoured in later Anglo-Saxon England, there is no shortage of related iconographic motifs incorporated into most of the compositions and as such, understanding of the theological and cultural complexities of this period is greatly enhanced.

Thusly, Chapter 6 will consider: the purposeful depiction of the Divine alongside the secular motifs, creating a mix of social and cultural elements that express wider concerns, morals and concepts consistent with contemporary Anglo-Saxon conventions; the practice of embellishment with, and embellishing of, ivory in wider artistic practices; and finally, the ‘value’ of the *ivory* crucifixion that seems to have held such significance in the devotional lives of the later Anglo-Saxons, highlighting a broader trend of bringing together diverse media to establish and promote the ideas of value, luxury and status across the spectrum of artistic creation within Anglo-Saxon England.

1.3 The Supporting Evidence

Given the wide-ranging nature of this study of the ivories of Anglo-Saxon England produced between *c.*500 and 1066, a catalogue of the individual pieces is essential. This will enable the visual analyses to be made with reference to the salient details in each instance, allowing the arguments to be made more succinctly. While each of the 57 ivories included in the Catalogue deserve full discussion, the limitations of the current study mean that this cannot be achieved. Implicitly therefore, the Catalogue allows for the discussion of those ivories not selected for analysis at each point in the overall argument, to be situated within a wider corpus of ivory production, alongside those who were called upon within the chapters to elucidate the arguments and theories therein. Thus, each catalogue entry provides, in brief, the arguments informing their inclusion, as well as the relevant statistics: date, material, provenance, condition, description, and bibliography.

Furthermore, as this study provides a broader, more developed visualisation of the ivories of Anglo-Saxon England, many images are included in an effort to reveal all facets

of the ivories, which ideally provides a more three-dimensional understanding of the fifty-seven objects. These are expanded by a series of comparative images, highlighting the extensive use made of comparanda within this study. Again, this allows for clear insight to the diverse array of objects invoked within this study to support and further the overall argument that the ivories of Anglo-Saxon England warrant a greater appreciation of the significant role they played in the artistic output of early medieval England.

CHAPTER 2
ANGLO-SAXON IVORIES IN PRINT AND ON DISPLAY:
PUBLICATION, COLLECTION, EXHIBITION AND APATHY

2.1 Introduction

The early interest in, and scholarly responses to, the arts of Anglo-Saxon England generally was limited between Leland's study on the Reculver cross in 1540 and the mid-nineteenth century, producing only four substantial texts on the subject.¹¹ In the fifty years following, however, a number of publications appeared covering a range of topics: there were seven major exhibitions that all displayed ivories among the early medieval art,¹² and two large collections of ivories were founded, one gifted to the Liverpool Free Public Museum, the other to the British Museum.¹³ Against this background, the earliest written accounts of the arts of Anglo-Saxon England, and to a greater extent the ivories, were understandably few and far between as the focus of many scholars in the early days of art historical study was on Greek and Roman Classical and Italian Renaissance forms and architecture. Although Art History emerged as an academic discipline in the course of the nineteenth-century, art historians would not begin to produce substantial studies in any significant number on the different aspects of the early medieval/Anglo-Saxon arts until the early twentieth-century, with the few that were published, generally being written by antiquarians and archaeologists. Thus the early attitudes informing the scholarship, collection and display of Anglo-Saxon ivories are for the most part elusive, yet, in the context of the wider development of art historical scholarship and interests in collecting the arts of early medieval England, it can be seen that over the last century and a half, trends centring around nationalistic pride, a growing appreciation for the decorative arts and antiquarian pursuits, as well as methodological changes in the discipline of art history, all played a part in the work of generations of art historians, archaeologists, private collectors and museum curators who have brought the arts of c.500-1066 to the forefront

¹¹ See e.g. Leland, 1540; Brown, 1658; Turner, 1799-1805.

¹² It must be noted that none were named specifically Anglo-Saxon and few were identified as English productions. For more, see e.g. Pulzky, 1856; Wyatt, 1856; Maskell, 1872; Westwood, 1876; Molinier, 1896.

¹³ The Sir Hans Sloane collection, bequeathed to the museum on his death in 1753, consisted of over 71,000 objects. See: de Beer, 1953; Brooks, 1954; MacGregor, 1994.

of modern study. However, not all those arts were considered equally important – not least the early medieval ivories.

Here, therefore, the historiography of Anglo-Saxon art generally, will be undertaken as a brief preliminary discussion to provide a context in which to situate the study of the Anglo-Saxon ivories and to elucidate the manner in which the scholars and collectors of the arts and ivories of Anglo-Saxon England were part of wider networks of interest and influence, rather than existing as separate institutions and individual practitioners of research and display.

Thus consideration of the ivories will demonstrate the prevailing attitudes towards this particular subject within the history of Anglo-Saxon art particularly, while also providing a context for the ways in which the small-scale carvings in ivory have been approached (or not, as has often been the case) in academic and technical studies. Contemporary continental sources and comparisons will be useful in this review as they highlight the methodological trends of nineteenth and twentieth century dissemination of knowledge about the medium. Equally essential to understanding the intellectual and scholarly approaches to the Anglo-Saxon ivories is an appreciation of the collection and display of the objects themselves. Arguably, the perceived value of early medieval ivories reflects scholarly interest generally, but also demonstrates that the major purchases and acquisitions of early private and Museum collectors were in line with, and sometimes even promoted, the developing attitudes and methodologies towards the arts of Anglo-Saxon England. This being said, although scholarly ‘interest’ in and attitudes towards the early medieval ivories of Britain and Ireland were, and still are, extremely varied, overall they display considerable apathy towards the subject which as will be seen, has hampered progress in their study through to the twenty first century.

2.2 Publishing Anglo-Saxon Art

In Alan Deyermond’s *A Century of British Medieval Studies* (2007), Michael Kauffman and Jonathan Alexander explored “The Study of Medieval Art” between 1900 and 2000,¹⁴ with Alexander pointing out that compiling the work of scholars active in the study of medieval art after 1950 is a more feasible project than accessing similar information for the first half of the century. The implication here of the extensive amount of work done on

¹⁴ Kauffman, 2007: 645-53; Alexander, 2007: 654-76.

the medieval arts post-1950 does not take into account that such publications were not just influenced by those of the previous fifty years, but rather generations of international publications dating from the middle of the eighteenth century. These are not necessarily important for their content, which by today's standards is antiquarian and therefore considered to lack appropriate academic probity, but they do highlight the changes in attitude, interest and methodological approach in the material from which the more modern studies emerged.

By ignoring the scholarship on Anglo-Saxon art that significantly predates 1900, they fail to recognise that much of the early twentieth-century scholarship builds on, and likely represents reactions to, that which preceded it. The texts and authors highlighted here are therefore those deemed to have had the most impact on Anglo-Saxon art historical study, particularly in relation to the study of the ivories. Initially, the focus will be those early art historical texts that attempt to view Anglo-Saxon art in its entirety.¹⁵ Furthermore, in light of Kauffman and Alexander's approach of separating earlier and later scholarship, the writing of the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century reveals distinctive differences in their concerns and approaches to those of the second half of the twentieth century into the twenty first, and will therefore be considered separately.

2.2a Patterns and Developments, 1850-2015

It is difficult to ascertain the 'first' study of Anglo-Saxon art, but by the middle of the nineteenth century, the scholarship is increasingly marked by a conscious and systematic awareness of illuminated manuscripts¹⁶ and architecture,¹⁷ and by the 1850s artefacts recovered from 'pagan' burials were shown for the first time by Charles Roach Smith, supplemented by his publication in 1854 of Bryan Faussett's collection of Anglo-Saxon grave goods.¹⁸ These texts, along with John Akerman's 1855 *Remains of Pagan Saxondom*, constitute some of the earliest presentations of the archaeological finds of

¹⁵ It must be noted that limited knowledge of German and French means information of this scholarship is drawn from English source material. Note also, that while there are many important scholarly works on objects of specific media other than in ivory, these are not immediately relevant here.

¹⁶ Strutt, 1773, 1774-1776, 1779.

¹⁷ Rickman, 1817.

¹⁸ Roach-Smith, 1854. The Faussett collection was exhibited earlier, in 1844, but no catalogue was produced in that year.

several burials sites across England,¹⁹ and they mark a significant departure from the general trend of the time when publications on the Anglo-Saxon period remained steadfastly on the Anglo-Saxons as a people, with little reflection on the influence or impact of their artistic production.²⁰ This is not to say that no publications on the arts of the Anglo-Saxons were produced at this time, but they were few and far between, and were almost exclusively medium specific: Stephens' 1866 *Handbook of Old Northern Runic Monuments*; Tymms and Wyatts' *The Art of Illuminating as practiced in Europe from the Earliest Times* (1860);²¹ and Lewitt's 1878 work on *The Ceramic Arts of Great Britain from Pre-Historic Times Down to the Present Day*.²² Bucking this trend, Boye's *Industrial Arts of the Anglo-Saxon* (1853) presented a wider context on which other scholars could build, but, this apart, discussions of Anglo-Saxon art, including the majority which continued to appear in antiquarian journals, only presented individual objects of decorated metalwork, illumination and carved stone sculpture.²³ A notable exception among the journal articles was Brock's "Saxon Art and Architecture" of 1881 that looked especially at interlace work.²⁴

The early years of the twentieth century saw an increase in the number of articles and larger publications devoted to the subject of the Anglo-Saxon arts generally. John Pythian's *Story of Art in the British Isles* (1901) covered prehistoric art to that of the nineteenth century, providing an impressive coverage of a wide scope of material in a single volume while Gerard Baldwin Brown's *The Arts in Early England* (1903-1937) needed some seven volumes to cover his subject, the author dying in 1932 before the project could be completed.²⁵ A century earlier, however, several European writers had pursued this type of expansive scholarship: namely Alexandre du Sommerard, with his

¹⁹ Akermann, 1855, 1853. Perhaps the earliest account of Anglo-Saxon grave goods (although not seen as such), was Thomas Brown's *Hydriotaphia* of 1658 (see further below, 53).

²⁰ Including Turner's 1852 *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, Wright's 1861 *The Celt, the Roman and the Saxon: a History of the Early Inhabitants of Britain*, and Barnes' 1869 *Early England and the Saxon English*.

²¹ Here, 'Anglo-Saxon' is mentioned as an artistic style.

²² For full title of Lewitt's work, see bibliography. As Stephens' *Handbook* indicates, there was also a growing interest in the integration of study of the Anglo-Saxons and the peoples of Scandinavia and northern Europe; see Metcalfe, 1876.

²³ See for example: Wyatt, 1860; Franks, 1866: 224-25; Brown, 1888: 122-24.

²⁴ Brock, 1881: 103-9.

²⁵ Brown, 1903-1937: the final volume (VI) was published in two parts, posthumously in 1936 and 1937.

famous *Les Arts au Moyen Âge* (1838-46), and Carl Heideloff, *Die Ornamentik des Mittelalters* (1843-52). In this context, Pythian's and Baldwin Brown's volumes had the foundation they needed, not only to highlight the art and architecture of the Anglo-Saxons, but also to contextualize the subjects by including multi-disciplinary commentary on 'Saxon' life in relation to the arts.

Building upon these groundbreaking texts, the scholarship began to build up a collective knowledge and scope of the material: Reginald Smith's *A guide to the Anglo-Saxon and Foreign Teutonic Antiquities in the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities*, was written for the British Museum in 1923; Josef Strzygowski's *Origin of the Christian Church Art* (also 1923), discussed 'Hiberno-Saxon' art in the time of Bede; and Johannes Brønsted's famous *Early English Ornament: The Sources, Development and Relation to Foreign Styles of Pre-Norman Ornamental Art in England* (1924) highlighted animal and plant ornamentation across a range of media.²⁶ It was a trend that gathered force in the 1930s and 1940s: O Elfrida Saunders' *A History of English Art in the Middle Ages* (1932) and Thurlow Leeds' *Early Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology* (1936) looked at the arts and architecture of the period generally; Thomas Kendrick's *Anglo-Saxon art to AD 900 and Late Saxon and Viking Art* (1936 and 1949 respectively), explored Anglo-Saxon and Viking art by region and date; and Ernst Kitzinger's *Early Medieval Art in the British Museum* (1940) was as narrow in its scope as its title suggests and followed Kendrick's first volume in supporting his opinion of Roman superiority over Anglo-Saxon production.²⁷

Beyond these 'landmark' publications, journal articles continued to proliferate, especially in local antiquarian and archaeological journals,²⁸ nevertheless, after the early twentieth-century explosion of interest in Anglo-Saxon art, the decades between 1950 and 1970 saw interest in the subject much reduced.²⁹ The Sutton Hoo ship burial and its finds, eventually published by Rupert Bruce-Mitford for the British Museum in 1975, however,

²⁶ This period also saw the publication of more specific studies exploring certain media on a larger scale. See: Collingwood, 1927; Clapham, 1930; Cottrill, 1931; Underwood, 1933; Gardner, 1933.

²⁷ Although not art historical in its focus, Stenton, 1947 forms part of this trend of interest in the Anglo-Saxon by creating a political and social narrative of Anglo-Saxon society between c.550-1087.

²⁸ See e.g. Smith, 1930: 3-10; Kendrick, 1940: 174-82.

²⁹ The few scholarly publications in this period include: Kitzinger, 1950; Talbot-Rice, 1952; Stone, 1955; Boase, 1953; Saxl, 1954; Beckwith, 1964; Wilson, 1964.

seems to have inspired renewed interest which continued into the twenty-first century with the discovery of the Prittlewell Burial in 2003 and the Staffordshire Hoard(s) in 2009. This is not to say that the decades following World War II were unproductive: Lehmann-Brockhaus' five-volume *Lateinische Schriftquellen zur Kunst in England, Wales und Schottland von Jahre 901 bis zum Jahre 1307* (1955-60) allowed art historians to examine (late Anglo-Saxon) objects in the context of contemporary literature; Talbot Rice's *English Art: 871-1100* of 1952, began to look at the later centuries of the period; and was quickly followed by Thomas Boase's *English Art: 1100-1216* in 1953, which was introduced by a survey of late Anglo-Saxon art; and while John Beckwith's *Early Medieval Art* (1964) returns the focus to the early period, however gave the Anglo-Saxons a minor role in the context of Carolingian art.

It can be argued that Charles Dodwell's 1982 *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New Perspective* anticipated the rise in publications devoted to Anglo-Saxon art, fuelling academic scholarship into the twenty-first century, but this was produced at the same time as a number of exhibitions on Anglo-Saxon art and their accompanying catalogues: Backhouse, Turner and Webster's British Museum exhibition catalogue of *The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art* (1984); Williamson's 1987 V&A Museum *Medieval Sculpture and Works of Art* (which included a very short section on the Anglo-Saxons); Webster and Backhouse's later British Museum catalogue *The Making of England: Anglo-Saxon Art and Culture, AD 600-900* (1991); and Hawkes and Mills' edited collection of interdisciplinary essays on the art, architecture, history and literature of *Northumbria's Golden Age* (1999) produced to accompany an exhibition on Anglo-Saxon art held at the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne in 1996 – for which a general synopsis of the art of *The Golden Age of Northumbria* was produced in lieu of a catalogue. By contrast, the early twenty-first century experienced a comparative dearth of publications,³⁰ but following the archaeological recoveries in Kent and Staffordshire, Karkov's *The Art of Anglo-Saxon England* (2011), Webster's *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New History* (2012) and Michelle Brown's upcoming *Art of the Islands: Celtic, Pictish, Anglo-Saxon and Viking Visual Culture, c.450-1050* (forthcoming), all monographs, mark the breaking of a nearly fifty-year trend

³⁰ Other recent publications include Leahy, 2003; Pollington & Kerr, 2010; Coatsworth & Pinder, 2012.

of collections of essays as the main means of publishing on Anglo-Saxon art in the later twentieth century.

2.2b The Classical and the ‘Barbaric’: Art History and Anglo-Saxon Art

Having established the general pattern of publication in Anglo-Saxon art between *c.* 1850 and 2015, it is important to view the general emergence, rise, fall, and re-emergence of interest in the subject as responses to the wider scholarly art historical context and methodological approaches. As will be established, many of the works that set the ‘context’ for the study of Anglo-Saxon art generally, were written by scholars who had little previous dealings with the arts of early medieval England (even those working in the twentieth century), let alone the medieval period, yet their methodologies and approaches became the basis upon which much other later scholarship took its cue, including that on the ivories, and therefore they need to be reviewed in the light of the impact they had on the ways in which Anglo-Saxon art history has been articulated.

One of the primary concerns expressed in early scholarship on Anglo-Saxon artistic production was its connections and perceived value compared with objects of Roman or continental manufacture, with 1950 marking a significant change in this type of approach; before 1950 Anglo-Saxon artworks were compared to “superior” classical Roman artefacts, but after this they tended to be considered as entities (somewhat) separate from Rome, although much scholarship still makes such attributions and focuses on the influence of Rome, the Mediterranean and northern Europe, particularly the Carolingian Empire. Furthermore, not all earlier authors considered the sociological and cultural significance of the Anglo-Saxon artists in their own right, and the general trend among scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth century was to discuss Anglo-Saxon art objects as poor copies of Roman exemplars, or more confusingly as barbaric continuations of ‘Celtic’ art.³¹ These pre-1950 opinions were not voiced in a vacuum, however; they were articulated as part of the wider trends in art historical scholarship and methodologies at a time when art history, social and cultural theory, psychology, history and archaeology all contributed to a scholarly piecing together of concepts, according to

³¹ Here, Celtic art is understood to be (a) that associated with the peoples generally known as Celts, those who spoke the Celtic languages in Europe from pre-history to the modern period and (b) that of ancient peoples whose language is uncertain, but whose culture is deemed to coincide with that of Celtic speakers; see e.g. Jacobsthal, 1944; Collis, 2003; Frey, 2004: 107-29.

their research and academic backgrounds, in order to ascertain the best way to approach works of art.

In order to understand the methodologies followed by nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars in comparing Anglo-Saxon art with that of Rome and the Mediterranean, it is therefore important to set out (briefly) the foundations upon which they were building. And, as in so many cases, the narrative opens with the work of Johann Winckelmann (1717-1768), often considered the ‘Father of Art History and Archaeology’,³² who applied categories of style on a systematic basis to distinguish the difference between Greek, Greco-Roman and Roman art in his *History of Ancient Art among the Greeks* (1764).³³ By this means he defined an approach by which the rise, maturity and decline of art could be tracked within the wider context of a western European political, social and intellectual culture. Nearly a century later, the Swiss historian of art and culture Jacob Burckhardt (1818-97), credited with being “the great discoverer of the age of the Renaissance”,³⁴ again invoked the ‘Classical’ to demonstrate how “a period should be treated in its entirety, with regard not only for its painting, sculpture and architecture, but for the social institutions of its daily life as well.”³⁵ Against the background of such foundational work it is hardly surprising that scholars publishing on Anglo-Saxon art during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries favoured the arts of the Classical world over the creative output of early medieval Britain and Ireland.

At the same time, scholarly interest in publishing the artefacts of the Anglo-Saxon period developed slowly (even if interest in their archaeological recovery was keen), with only Thomas Brown’s *Hydriotaphia* of 1658 suggesting that Anglo-Saxon cremation urns were actually Roman, and Sharon Turner’s multi-volume *The History of the Anglo-Saxon* (1799-1805) which deemed the arts of the Anglo-Saxons to be “not very considerable”.³⁶ With the development of more ‘scientific’ practices in the field of archaeology in the nineteenth century, greater attention was paid to the culturally important pieces found within the graves. Akerman’s *Remains* was a masterful narration of finds from several burial sites and encouraged his readers to consider the intrinsic value of “the graves of our

³² Fernie, 2003: 68.

³³ Ibid.: 68-71.

³⁴ Due to his publication of *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* in 1860.

³⁵ Giedion, 1941: 3.

³⁶ Keynes, 2004: 273.

heathen Saxon forefathers.”³⁷ The numerous objects, Akerman remarked, afford “the sole evidence, as well as the most lively illustration, of their arts, manners, customs, and superstitions”.³⁸ Completely antiquarian in nature, this text was, as were most such publications of the time, “descriptive, critically amorphous and written for the educated public rather than for specialists”,³⁹ however it does follow Winckelmann and Burckhardt in creating the basis for which multidisciplinary studies would become the norm.

Also reflecting such influences was Pythian’s *History of Art in the British Isles*, a publication that marks the state of Anglo-Saxon scholarship at the turn of the twentieth century: addressing his readership he describes his ‘little book’ as a work for those who had “made little or no study of art and its history”, explaining that his readers should be happy to know that the arts of early medieval Britain and Ireland had played a part in the history of their country, and the book should thus give “some estimate of the place it ought to take in any civilisation worthy the name.”⁴⁰ In the chapter on ‘Art in Saxon England’, however, which Pythian set within a historical context, arguing that the art of the British Isles was heralded by the return of Christianity and Augustine’s conversion of Ethelbert, and exalting the qualities of the country’s arts, his examination of Anglo-Saxon Christian architecture and sculptured ornament is less than positive. Pythian describes them in terms of their ‘Celtic cousins’, deeming the sculpture as “rude in execution”, and the pagan Saxons, being “entirely ignorant of architecture [...] do not seem to have excelled in the minor arts, with the exception of jewellery”, until they were opened to the influence of the foreign craftsmen of King Alfred (849-99).⁴¹ Lacking any mention of manuscript illumination, and including only meagre reference to stone sculpture and metalwork and no mention at all of any ivories, the emphasis is on Roman superiority; in this it clearly reflects the writings of Winckelmann and Burckhardt in their more classical leanings.

While geo-political tensions would change relationships between academics across national and international borders in the course of the first half of the twentieth century, the damage caused by two World Wars and the Cold War that followed also saw changes in the systems of academic study. While the nationality of a scholar and their

³⁷ Akermann, 1855: vii.

³⁸ Ibid.: vii.

³⁹ Brush, 1996: 143.

⁴⁰ Pythian, 1901: 5.

⁴¹ Ibid.: 52.

methodologies are arguably irrelevant to consideration of their work, the politics played out in the international arenas are reflected in the attitudes articulated in publications on art history and affected university curricula during this period. Awareness of these contexts thus needs to be considered in any discussion of the methodologies appropriated to discuss the differing opinions of Anglo-Saxon art from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century.

Two figures who would have an important influence on the methodologies adapted by art historians during the First World War were Anton Springer (1825-91) and Robert Vischer (1847-1933), both of whom viewed the purpose of their study in different ways: Springer continued to emphasise the formal or analytical style of a work of art in his *Leitfadender Baukunst des Christlichen Mittelalters* of 1854, pushing his students to form an understanding of their work through a ‘critical eye’, and a ‘secure scholarly technique’ by surveying the more insignificant details which might lead to a signature or style;⁴² Vischer criticized this approach for its more apathetic formal and fact-finding pursuits rather than allowing for the individual artist’s creative process in his *Kunstgeschichte und Humanismus* (1880).⁴³

Around the same time, Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945), a student of Burckhardt’s, would teach the first generation of scholars whose work brought German art history to the forefront of the field. Considered the ‘Father of Modern Art History’, his classifying principles set out in *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (1915) were instrumental in developing the formal analysis of many art historians in the twentieth century. Written at the outbreak of WWI it emphasises a ‘scientific’ approach to the history of art by combining three concepts: psychology, artistic comparison to distinguish style, and the idea of national art, questioning whether there was an inherently “Italian” or “German” style. At about the same time, a major school of thought was emerging at the University of Vienna, the first generation of which was defined by the work of Alois Riegl (1858-1905) and Franz Wickhoff (1853-1909) who tended to re-examine ‘lost’ or overlooked periods of art history. Both wrote extensively on the late antique period that had previously been thought a phase of decline from the classical ideal.

⁴² Springer, 1854; Brush, 1996: 27-31.

⁴³ Brush, 1996: 29.

Their work is clearly reflected in Baldwin Brown's multi-volume *Arts in Early England* (1903-37) which set out to provide a context for the relation between the arts and the daily lives of the people in early medieval Britain and Ireland, the first volume being devoted to 'The Life of Saxon England and its Relation to the Arts'.⁴⁴ Seeking to provide a purposeful look at this 'lost' period of art history, Brown argued that despite their large number, the "objects in question possess moreover an intrinsic interest through their artistic excellence."⁴⁵ Notwithstanding his obvious admiration for Anglo-Saxon arts, Brown's lack of interest in the ivories of this era reflects the attitudes towards them during that period; the only ivory objects included were the carved panels of Maximian's sixth-century episcopal throne in Ravenna (Fig. 2.1),⁴⁶ presented as comparisons to Anglo-Saxon stone carved panels.⁴⁷

Following Brown's methodological lead, new topics were also introduced into the field in journal articles. Baldwin Brown himself posed the question: "Was the Anglo-Saxon an Artist?" in 1916, and a year later, in 1917 Pite deemed it relevant to enquire into "The Study of Anglo-Saxon Art", while Goldschmidt explored the "English influence on Medieval Art of the Continent" in 1939. Such publications indicate that scholars were expanding their focus of interest beyond formal analysis of individual or small groups of objects into wider concerns and questions regarding the art and its impact.

After Riegl and Wickhoff, the second generation of Viennese scholars included several of the most influential twentieth-century art historians: Josef Strzygowski (1862-1941), Ernst Gombrich (1909-2001) and Hans Sedlmayr (1896-1984). These academics returned to the work of the first generation in the 1930s, focusing specifically on Riegl and his concept of *Kunstwollen*.⁴⁸ Sedlmayr in particular promoted the rejection of the study of iconography, patronage and other contextual approaches preferring instead to focus on aesthetic qualities.⁴⁹ Alongside these 'second generation' Vienna School scholars, Adolph Goldschmidt (1863-1944) and Wilhelm Vöge (1868-1952) can perhaps be considered a

⁴⁴ Brown 1903-1937: 1903.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: vol. III, 2.

⁴⁶ Note that all comparative images are illustrated in vol. II of this study and are segmented according to chapter for ease of access.

⁴⁷ Brown, 1903-37: vol. V, 281, 283, 286, 311, 410.

⁴⁸ Loosely translated as "will to art". One of Riegl's clearer definitions of this idea is explained in the final chapter of *Spätromische Kunstindustrie* (1901). See Wood, 2000.

⁴⁹ Sorenson, DAH: "Sedlmayr, Hans". Unfortunately racist tendencies and membership of the Nazi party by Strzygowski and Sedlmayr have coloured the reputation of the Second Vienna School.

second generation of German art historical scholarship. In her *Shaping of Art History* (1996) Katherine Brush has investigated German art historical study through Vöge and Goldschmidt's careers to provide a useful starting point in the consideration of their role in the study of art history, and most importantly to this study, their production of the first 'modern' catalogues of ivories. These men belonged to the initial group of professional art historians whose careful first-hand study of objects would become standard practice among scholars; the earliest art historical methodologies focused primarily on gaining respect for the emerging subject, and by the time Vöge and Goldschmidt began their professional careers in the early twentieth century, these methodologies had progressed to debates on style, iconography, and arguments between the 'scientific' and 'aesthetic' study of art objects and subject matter.⁵⁰

Vöge's work *Die Elfenbeinbildwerke der königlichen Museen zu Berlin* (1900) catalogued the Berlin Museum's ivory sculpture during his tenure there from 1897-1910 and likely influenced the later work of Goldschmidt, as well as cementing the tradition of cataloguing medieval ivories by scholars of the twentieth and twenty-first century. Goldschmidt's four volume *Die Elfenbeinskulpturen aus der Zeit der karolingischen und sächsischen Kaiser, VIII.-XI. Jahrhundert* (1914-1926) became the leading inventory of medieval ivory sculpture in the western world, providing for the first time a published collection of a group of objects that were widely scattered and poorly documented. The catalogue's entries, while giving each ivory a proper place (and photograph to match), still remained heavily influenced by appreciation of the Classical and connected each 'Saxon' object (including those discussed in this thesis and catalogue) to the Continent in some way. That being said, both Vöge's and Goldschmidt's catalogues were merely that – catalogues – and so did not provide much beyond the usual museum 'tombstone' information, as well as some vague references to style, iconography, and contextual history of each ivory. Unfortunately, with the growing awareness of the horrors of WWI came the first public anti-German positions taken up by art historians, particularly among French scholars such as Mâle, and with this, most German scholarship was not promoted in France.⁵¹

⁵⁰ It must be noted that most art historians did not specialize in one period or medium as they do today, and so could range widely in their scholarship. Brush, 1996: 93.

⁵¹ Brush, 1996: 142.

However, Vöge and Goldschmidt's catalogues certainly influenced museum curators in England, namely Ormonde Dalton (Keeper of the British and Medieval Antiquities Department at the British Museum, 1921-28) and Margaret Longhurst (Keeper of the Department of Architecture and Sculpture at the V&A Museum, 1938-42), who both produced valuable catalogues of the ivories in their collections: Dalton published the British Museum's ivories (1909) while Longhurst's *English Ivories* (1926) and *Catalogue of Carvings in Ivory* (Vol. I in 1927, Vol. II in 1929) examined the ivories of early medieval Britain and Ireland as well as those belonging to the V&A Museum. Most importantly, these catalogues were published in English and were the first such to be devoted to the ivories for nearly seventy years. Previous catalogues of ivories had been printed in English but they were antiquarian in nature and did not include the scholarship of Goldschmidt or the modern approach to labelling objects according to style, subject matter or context as did Dalton and Longhurst.⁵²

Apart from these catalogues, however, scholarship in Britain continued to be largely antiquarian and formalist in nature, unaffected by methodological developments on the Continent, and until the 1920s, it tended to concentrate on sculpture in Britain and Ireland, although, given the first-hand experience of many during WWI, examples in France also came under increasing scrutiny, like those highlighted by Henri Focillon.⁵³ These studies, however, were "critically amorphous and written for the educated public rather than specialists",⁵⁴ perhaps reflecting an attitude long ago articulated by Akerman who regarded French and German academics as lacking in their archaeological work.⁵⁵

In 1924, Johannes Jahn (1892-1976) published a series of essays entitled *Die Kunstwissenschaft der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellung* that included seven by German authors and one by the American, Kingsley Porter, about the state of the discipline at the time. While these were important in their own right, Jahn's introduction proposed that the abandonment of "aesthetic dogmatism" had enabled scholars to recognize the importance and integral value of neglected eras and subjects. Despite this proclamation, most studies by British-born scholars in this post-war period were based upon British, French and American scholarship; it was only with the establishment of the first honours degree

⁵² See e.g.: Pulzky, 1856; Wyatt, 1856; Maskell, 1872; Westwood, 1876; Molinier, 1896.

⁵³ Focillon, 1938: 43.

⁵⁴ Brush, 1996: 143.

⁵⁵ Akermann, 1855: viii.

program in the history of art at the Courtauld Institute in 1932, and the arrival of German-trained émigrés in the late 1930s that the tone of British scholarship changed as it had in North America.⁵⁶

One of these émigrés was Ernst Kitzinger (1912-2003), a student when the Social Democrats rose to power who, realizing that as a Jew he had little academic future in Germany, quickly completed his dissertation and left for Rome before moving to England where he took a position under the tutelage of Thomas Kendrick (1895-1979) at the British Museum.⁵⁷ Both men would publish studies on the arts of Anglo-Saxon England and while their paths were different, it must be noted that neither were originally scholars of Anglo-Saxon art. Kendrick's interest was initially in pre-historic art and Kitzinger's, before coming to England, had been in seventh- and eighth-century painting in Rome.⁵⁸ Due to their "newness" to the field of Anglo-Saxon art history and previous disregard for the material, it is understandable that their work in the later 1930s displays a sense of uncertainty and a lack of esteem for the art works under consideration; furthermore, Kendrick's *Anglo-Saxon Art to AD 900* (1938) and Kitzinger's *Early Medieval Art in the British Museum* (1940) were entirely dismissive of Anglo-Saxon ivories. Their attitude to Anglo-Saxon art generally, however, reflects the work of Pythian and Baldwin Brown, as well as Riegl and Wölfflin. Riegl's work, however 'revolutionary' it had been in highlighting the decorative non-figural arts (as opposed to the figural and fine arts), was still based on the merits of the Roman arts that he claimed were "undeniably" the products of "the most important period in the history of the world".⁵⁹ Wölfflin's work on style had developed around what he deemed to be the early or classic (fifteenth or sixteenth century) Renaissance and Baroque (seventeenth century) phases of art. His classicizing tendencies were not as explicit as those of Riegl, but his subtle use of the terms 'primitives' and

⁵⁶ Harvard (under Kingsley Porter (1883-1933) and Chandler Rafter Post (1881-1959)), and Princeton (under Earl Baldwin Smith (1888-1956), Albert M. Friend, Jr (1894-1956), Ernst DeWald (1891-1968) and Charles Rufus Morey (1877-1955)), had been the centres of the development of art history in the 1920s, with significant graduate programmes, and had led the foundation of the College Art Association (1913), while Morey established the Iconographic Index of Christian Art in 1917 and helped launch *Art Studies* in 1923. It was into this setting that leading European scholars were invited for extended periods as guest lecturers in the 1920s and 1930s, introducing their methodologies to North American academic circles. Brush, 1996: 144-45.

⁵⁷ It was Kendrick who helped Kitzinger and other refugees from Nazi Germany to find sanctuary and work in England during the 1930s. Sorenson, DAH: "Kendrick, Thomas Downing."

⁵⁸ See e.g.: Kitzinger, 1936 (dissertation), 1951, 1954, 1955, 1960.

⁵⁹ Riegl & Kain, 1992: 125.

‘barbarians’ throughout his discussion nevertheless made his opinions clear. Despite the stated aim of Riegl and Wölfflin, to examine ‘style’ and ‘beauty’ as ‘neutral’ terms, their attitudes are clearly articulated in the work of Kendrick and that of Kitzinger, and it was the classical forms (and the cultures that created them: Greeks, Romans, Cinquecentists) that were deemed most appropriate for examination.

Kendrick’s 1938 text is for the most part disparaging in its tone concerning the talents of Anglo-Saxon artists; his focus was rather on comparing the Anglo-Saxon work to that of the Romans, declaring that “[for] over two hundred years the beggarly Saxon world of the wooden halls [was able] to scorn, to destroy and forget the impressive stamp of Roman greatness that had been so laboriously upon (sic) this far-off province of Britain”.⁶⁰ Living in constant pain from wounds received in WWI,⁶¹ Kendrick’s writings are, perhaps not surprisingly, more emphatic than those of either Riegl or Wölfflin in his description of the superiority of Roman art *vis à vis* that of the Germanic Anglo-Saxons; with slight changes in emphasis, the chapters of his book reveal this preference from the start. Indeed, he opens with a statement that however lavish his praise is for ‘barbaric’ art, he had “no desire to do more than insist upon the necessity of recognizing the existence of this and other sculptures of an *un-Roman sort* (italics added)”.⁶² Throughout, words like “provincialism”, “native”, and “barbaric” are set against “official” or “traditional” Roman tastes, and in the third chapter on Arthurian Britain, he goes so far as to say that:

since the Saxons introduced no ambitious works such as sculptures and pavements, it can only be *trifles* in the way of *personal* ornaments and *minor* property of the individual that Arthurian Britain and Pagan Saxondom offer for our study. (italics added)⁶³

While Kendrick links the early Anglo-Saxon Church to Rome and classicism in his consideration of the building of churches in the seventh century, this is seen as a direct result of the influence of the Roman Church. But rather than pointing out the importance of the resurgence of classicism, he unexpectedly applauds the artists – who with the arrival of the Church from Rome have become ‘English’ – commending their efforts as beautiful and vital due to the freedom they enjoyed in utilizing the best of both worlds by combining

⁶⁰ Kendrick, 1938: 47.

⁶¹ Wilson, 2004: Oxford DNB website.

⁶² Kendrick, 1938: 22.

⁶³ Ibid.: 47.

the “graceful foliate themes of a classical order and rich barbaric patterns”.⁶⁴ This does not mean that Kendrick abandoned his opinion of works that he deemed to be of lesser quality in relation to his classicizing norms. Most notably, for the purposes of this study, he describes the whalebone Franks Casket (cat. 2; Fig. 2.2)⁶⁵ as “arid and incompetent” in its ignorance of classicizing elements and its preference for the northern barbaric traditions of restless and crowded compositions.⁶⁶ Kendrick puts aside any analysis of the potential *meaning* behind the forms of the art objects he considers and it is this lack of deeper analysis presents the reader with what Panofsky called the pre-iconographical level of description,⁶⁷ providing only a vague sense of how objects and events were expressed by the artist through forms.

Overall, despite various idiosyncrasies, Kendrick’s description of the art of the Anglo-Saxon world reflects the art historical methodologies popular in the early twentieth century. He manages to combine several schools of thought successfully, illustrating objects as having stylistic, aesthetic and ‘pre-iconographical’ importance, aspects demonstrated by Riegl and Wölfflin, as well as Focillon and Panofsky to be important to art historical study in the 1920s. Generally speaking, Kendrick’s book can be regarded as both a study of Anglo-Saxon art, and a reference for early twentieth-century art historical methodologies. Based out of a series of lectures given at the Courtauld Institute of Art, the book achieves what Kendrick set out to do: provide a “fairly complete” account of the foundations of the English medieval style. While it reveals (through its generalizations and lack of evidence in some cases) its origins as a series of lectures, Kendrick executes a text on Anglo-Saxon art that thoroughly covers a more all-inclusive sense of the period as opposed to the contemporary specific texts of Collingwood (1927) or Clapham (1930), which focus on stone sculpture and architecture. Furthermore, despite the inevitable advances in the field since its publication, Kendrick’s work is not completely obsolete, but rather has given the modern art historian a view into early twentieth-century approaches that in some cases are rehearsed in their own scholarship.

⁶⁴ Ibid.: 121.

⁶⁵ Note that catalogue and comparative figure entries, while both being illustrated in vol. II, are different entities and provide a number of different physical views and information.

⁶⁶ Kendrick, 1938: 124.

⁶⁷ Panofsky, 1939: 14.

It is evident through both association with, and reading the work of scholars after Kendrick, that the scholarship of his generation was varied in its approaches. Kitzinger's short text, published two years after Kendrick's, displays the immediate impact of their association, and while Kitzinger is more consistent throughout his work as far as continuing the narrative and stylistic analysis, he does repeat some of Kendrick's opinions concerning Roman art – unsurprisingly given his early work on the early Christian art of Rome. Describing the tendency for many art historians (then, as now) to ignore the era between Constantine and Charlemagne, Kitzinger calls attention to research methods of the previous decades as having revealed the importance of the art of these intermediate centuries,⁶⁸ before claiming that the significance of this period does not lie in the brilliance of Anglo-Saxon art (or any other cultural/national artistic style), but rather in its alignment with classical art, asserting that the epoch ensured the continuance of the classical tradition (“which was in grave danger of dying out when pagan religion and pagan civilization died”),⁶⁹ and it provided a starting point for the process that developed Greek and Roman styles to the abstract and transcendental style of the Middle Ages.⁷⁰ Thus, while Kendrick supported the ‘superiority’ of Roman art throughout his text, Kitzinger shows a semi-supportive stance for medieval artistic styles in so far as they enabled the classical arts to “survive”. He explores more fully the connection of the two styles by informing the reader that the medieval artist's creations, even when showing stylistic characteristics of a more classical tradition, are not actually classical but rather the artist's imitation and copying of a technical process of his forefathers.⁷¹ In this, he works within the remit of stylistic analysis promoted by Wölfflin and Focillon (1915, 1938 & 1943), while exploring how medieval art and classic art are joined, the sort of continuation of style (rather than the death of it) that Focillon encouraged in his work.⁷²

While the 1930s and 1940s saw a near cessation of exhibitions and catalogues devoted to any subject, a number of publications on the art and sculpture of Anglo-Saxon

⁶⁸ Kitzinger, 1940: 1.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*: 2.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*: 2; this theme was subsequently articulated by two other émigrés, Fritz Saxl (1890-1948) and Rudolf Wittkower (1901-71) in their *British Art and the Mediterranean* (1948).

⁷¹ Kitzinger, 1940: 16.

⁷² See Focillon, Hogan & Kubler, 1957. Kitzinger would return to Anglo-Saxon art throughout his career before his death in 2003. See e.g. Kendrick, 1936: 61-71; 1940: 40-63; 1950; 1993: 3-15.

England did appear.⁷³ Nevertheless, despite the few books on the sculpture of Anglo-Saxon England that were published,⁷⁴ it is the more wide-ranging works on Anglo-Saxon art and archaeology produced before this, by Kendrick and Kitzinger that are most likely to be the most recognized today.

Following WWII, diverging theories underpinning art history began to emerge. In Germany, publications that focused on issues of meaning and theory were met with criticism or viewed with disdain, which as Brush suggests, was due to the National Socialists' scholarly prose of the previous decade. Instead, the scholarship returned to the more 'scientific' approach to art history, which remained within the boundaries of formal analysis and "exact[ing] [technical] knowledge of the works themselves".⁷⁵ Not surprisingly, perhaps, this complemented the prevailing tendency of American scholars to not stray from formalist methods of investigation, despite the fact that Focillon, Panofsky and others were working and teaching in America during this time.⁷⁶ On both sides of the Atlantic, it seems, the looming Cold War fostered a climate that discouraged variance from the norm, leading to a largely conformist art historical scholarship from about 1950 to the late 1970s, despite the establishment of the new universities in England supporting the study of History of Art during the 1960s.⁷⁷

Thus, during this period it remains the case that the discipline of art history was dominated by approaches of style, iconography, empiricism and connoisseurship. Against this background the pioneering work of Meyer Schapiro (1904-96) and Ernst Gombrich (1909-2001) is widely known, not least because of the diverse areas of interest that were brought into their research in order to more fully explore the periods and objects under examination. Schapiro was a Lithuanian-born American art historian who was initially influenced by the work of Vögle, Riegl and Porter, but was later criticised for his Socialist approach to art history;⁷⁸ his essay "Style" in 1953, however, lacks overt political

⁷³ See Chamot, 1930; Clapham, 1930; Maclagan & V&A Museum, 1930; Smith, 1930; Cottrill, 1931, 1935; Casson, 1932, 1935; Green & Harrison, 1933-34; Royal Academy, 1934; Gardner, 1935; Llwylyn, 1935; Leeds, 1936; Kitzinger, 1936, 1940a, 1940b; Bressie, 1939; Mann & BFAC, 1939; Robertson, 1939; Morey, 1942; Schapiro, 1942, 1943; Souers, 1943.

⁷⁴ See e.g. Clapham, 1930; Cottrill, 1931; Gardner, 1935.

⁷⁵ Brush, 1996: 149

⁷⁶ Ibid.: 149.

⁷⁷ Leicester (1957), Sussex (1961), York (1963), East Anglia (1964), Essex (1965), Kent (1965), Warwick (1965). Alexander, 2007: 654.

⁷⁸ Sorenson, DAH website: "Schapiro, Meyer".

association. Describing style as “an essential object of investigation,” he went on to say that a style is more a “vehicle of expression” than a definitive group of specific features.⁷⁹ This line of thought differs markedly to the essay of the same title by Gombrich fifteen years later. An Austrian-born art historian who spent most of his working life in England, Gombrich championed the psychological approach to art,⁸⁰ and his work on analysing the psychology of style, iconography and symbolism influenced that of several scholars in the 1980s. Interestingly for this discussion, his essay on style claims that it, or rather the names for styles used in art history, originated from standard contexts: “they denote either the (desirable) dependence on a classical norm or the (condemned) deviations from it”.⁸¹

Despite such observations and discussions of what had become one of the major methodological approaches to the study of Art History, and particularly the Anglo-Saxon ivories, the prevailing sense of entrenchment means that the years between 1950 and the 1974 exhibition of “Ivory carvings in Early Medieval England: 700-1200” at the V&A, were marked by almost complete apathy from an academic and museum viewpoint, with no exhibitions of Anglo-Saxon art, and a continued focus on the influence of the Mediterranean as a whole on the period, which underpinned the continued focus on Anglo-Saxon sculpture. Overall, the emphasis on barbarity, paganism and Roman authority resonated in the scholarship although it was gradually recast in terms of the Carolingian, Ottonian and ‘Byzantine’ successors of Roman imperialism;⁸² it was a practice that only further pressed the arts, and ivories, of Anglo-Saxon England to the periphery. Beginning with Kendrick’s *Late Saxon and Viking Art* (1949), Rice’s *English Art 871-1100* (1952) and Boase’s *English Art 1100-1216* (1952), the style of Anglo-Saxon or English art was explained in terms of its dependence, not on Roman work, but on what was seen as the ‘Roman’ art of the Continent (Carolingian, Ottonian, Byzantine, French, and German). While a perception of the superiority of Mediterranean work would remain, the primacy of Roman art would lose much of its hold on academic publications concerning the artistic production of the Anglo-Saxons, which increasingly came to be considered as a reaction to their more “superior” European counterparts.

⁷⁹ Schapiro, 1953: 143-145.

⁸⁰ Sorenson, DAH website: “Gombrich, Ernst Hans Joseph, Sir”.

⁸¹ Gombrich, 1966: vol. 15, 361.

⁸² “Byzantium” is a term first introduced in the eighteenth century to denote that part of the Roman Empire that looked towards Greek culture and language.

Furthermore, throughout the 1970s both scholarly publications and museum productions became increasingly specific while remaining steadfastly focused on the art of metalwork, stone sculpture and manuscript illumination of Anglo-Saxon England. In this respect, while marking a significant departure into the field of ivory scholarship, Beckwith's 1974 exhibition of the ivory carvings of early medieval England reflects the general trend of the time: in its specificity and its focus on a single art form. It is certainly in marked contrast to the exhibitions of Anglo-Saxon art during the 1980s and 1990s: "The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art: 966-1066" (1984), "The Making of England" (1991), and "Treasures from the Lost Kingdom of Northumbria" (1996),⁸³ and the publications of David Wilson (on Anglo-Saxon art from a largely archaeological point of view), and James Campbell (on the Anglo-Saxons, from the point of view of history, art history, literature and archaeology), both of which appeared in 1984. In all of these, to a greater or lesser extent, the concern remained to situate the Anglo-Saxon material within the wider context of the Roman/continental world, but here the emphasis is perhaps reflecting an attempt to place the Anglo-Saxon as part of a wider Europe, in keeping with political and economic developments of the time that saw Britain as an integral member of the European Union.

It was, however, Charles Dodwell's *Anglo-Saxon Art: a New Perspective* of 1982 that introduced a new approach to analysis of the subject as a whole, expressing a desire to:

seek an understanding of Anglo-Saxon taste, to search our information about Anglo-Saxon artists, to see if the distortions given to Anglo-Saxon art by a given pattern of survivals can be corrected by an examination of the comments made about Anglo-Saxon art whilst it was still in balance and a normal part of society.⁸⁴

Although some of Dodwell's ideas were not revolutionary, his approach was. In the field of Anglo-Saxon sculptural studies scholars trained in the language and literature of the Anglo-Saxons were turning their attention to the art of stone carving,⁸⁵ and elucidating the material through the lens of contemporary literature. It was this approach that Dodwell

⁸³ This exhibition was accompanied by Hawkes' publication on *The Golden Age of Northumbria* (1996), and an international conference (Hawkes & Mills, 1999).

⁸⁴ Dodwell, 1982: 14.

⁸⁵ See e.g.: Cramp, CASSS; Ó Carragáin, 1978: 131-47; Bailey, 1980.

brought to the study of Anglo-Saxon art in its entirety. Thus when speaking on the extant contemporary literary accounts and the surviving objects, he explains that the lack of formal description of three-dimensional objects is due to an interest in something ‘special’, which only allowed for descriptions of objects in relation to something like a relic or reliquary.⁸⁶ This, Dodwell argues, was due not only to the fact that the materials used by Anglo-Saxon artists were not always costly, but also that Anglo-Saxon writers did not think in three-dimensional terms; rather they described their world through poetry and chronicles as if it were a two-dimensional manuscript, “one with splendour of gold, richness of colour, vigour of line and subtlety of decoration, but with little indication of depth”.⁸⁷ Nowhere in his text does Dodwell mention the “superiority” of the arts of Rome; rather than focusing on appropriation and influence (in marked contrast to the contemporary study of Anglo-Saxon sculpture), his work reflects the words and tastes of the Anglo-Saxons themselves (incomplete though the records may be), and in the course of this he specifically highlights eight ivories belonging to the period.⁸⁸ To a certain extent his account (and those of the sculptural scholars) demonstrates the influence of the work of previous writers, such as Baldwin Brown, who explored the arts in the context of the life of the people in the early middle ages, following Lehmann-Brockhaus’ *Lateinische Schriftquellen* of 1955-60, and Panofsky’s *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (1955) which explored men, art and *humanitas* throughout the ages, highlighting that medieval artists “accepted and developed” the traditions of their forefathers.⁸⁹

With the discoveries in Kent and Staffordshire in the early twenty-first century, new debates in Anglo-Saxon art have been sparked from various disciplinary points of view and it is possible to see a (renewed) tendency towards generalisation among many art historians: a bringing together of earlier methodologies into the analysis of objects or periods that includes the ‘scientific’, factual provenance and form, the humanist value of the ‘artistic genius’, and the concept of a ‘social’ art history where the objects speak for their respective artist, patron, culture, and period. Against this methodological and

⁸⁶ Dodwell, 1982: 19.

⁸⁷ Ibid.: 41. See further, Chapter 5.

⁸⁸ Ibid.: 141, 171, 190, 197, 198, 200, 201, 202.

⁸⁹ See also Clark 1974; Caviness 1989.

disciplinary growth and change, it is interesting to note an emerging interest in the materiality of Anglo-Saxon ivory, particularly among archaeologists.⁹⁰

Notably, however during this period, there have been no exhibitions on Anglo-Saxon art generally, or the ivories in particular. Nevertheless, two texts have appeared in quick succession which represent a return to interest in Anglo-Saxon art generally: by Catherine Karkov and Leslie Webster, with a third forthcoming by Michelle Brown.⁹¹ Karkov's text, *The Art of Anglo-Saxon England*, while advocating a post-colonial approach, but remaining bound to the cross-cultural interests of earlier scholars, focuses primarily on the later manuscripts, yet does include mention of five ivories included in this study.⁹² Webster's monograph, *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New History*, likewise views the early medieval art of England within a wider European context, and building on her long-standing interest in Anglo-Saxon ivories she includes discussion of them. In addition, she published a short monograph, one of the first of its kind, on the Franks Casket,⁹³ while Williamson, returning to the tradition established by Vöge, Goldschmidt, Dalton, Longhurst and Beckwith, has published a catalogue of the ivories held in the V&A.⁹⁴ And, like the work of his predecessors, this prioritises the continental and classical, and downplays the Anglo-Saxon with many of the ivories deemed to be particularly 'classical' in their style being considered the products of continental workshops.⁹⁵

2.3 Collection and Display: the Private and Public Collection of Anglo-Saxon Ivories, from Auction House to Museum Gallery

Having set out the general patterns and developments in the study of Anglo-Saxon ivories in the context of Anglo-Saxon art generally, and Art History more broadly, it has become clear that the practice of collecting and displaying the ivories is integral to understanding perceptions of the objects. The general practice of collection and display of objects deemed to be precious and/or of historical, artistic or scientific value is long standing and cross-cultural, both in terms of the nationality or ethnicity of the collector, and in the

⁹⁰ See further Chapter 3.

⁹¹ Karkov, 2011; Webster, 2012a; Brown, forthcoming.

⁹² See cats. 2, 3, 34, 50, 56. Karkov, 2011: 67-8, 106-7, 130-31, 146-53, 218-20.

⁹³ Webster, 2012b.

⁹⁴ Williamson, 2010.

⁹⁵ See further, Chapter 4.

origin of the objects and craftsmen who made them. While this makes for a very interesting (and infinitely broad) starting point into tracing the collection of ivory in all forms, this study will focus on the most important and influential individuals and institutions that promoted the collection and display of Anglo-Saxon ivories. But given the intimate relation between academic commentaries and museum curation, this will be situated within the context of private and institutional collecting in Britain and Ireland, and the general practice of collecting early medieval art.

Between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries it seems that the English were avid art collectors, considered as being surpassed in their love of surrounding themselves with beautiful objects only by the Italians.⁹⁶ The years between 1770 and 1830 were a ‘Golden Age’ for English collectors, the period coinciding as it does with the accumulation of European art works flooding into Britain and Ireland with the social, economic and ecclesiastical upheavals that accompanied the revolutions and wars of the time.⁹⁷ What is of interest here is that unlike many European collectors, who placed their objects in cabinets, the English seem to have favoured more overtly public displays of their acquisitions.⁹⁸ The rising popularity of owning large collections of valuable objects was boosted by the participation of the British royal family and became intrinsic to the establishment and display of high social status.⁹⁹ Royal benefactors such as Frederick, Prince of Wales (1701-51), George III (1738-1820), George IV (1762-1830) and Prince Albert, the Prince Consort (1819-61) boosted the prestige of acts of patronage, of collection and the public display of the art for most of the late eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁰ As part of this trend, literature on taste and catalogues of private collections became ever more popular, which in turn had an impact on later museum catalogues and collection choices.¹⁰¹ It is in this environment that the emergence of the ‘official’ collector, the Museum, can be traced, as well as that of those individuals

⁹⁶ Herrmann, 1999: 3.

⁹⁷ Williamson, 2010: 13; Herrmann, 1999: 6.

⁹⁸ Herrmann, 1999: 7. For the extensive study of this topic, see e.g. Kenseth, 1991; Elsner & Cardinal, 1994; Crane, 2000.

⁹⁹ Herrmann, 1999: 10, 14.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.: 14, 15; Williamson, 2010: 17.

¹⁰¹ For an extensive list, as well as a discussion on taste and collection, see Herrmann, 1999: 10, 42-44.

supplying objects “of a kind *and* enough connoisseurship to impress the professionals in the same field” through donation or private purchase to the Museum.¹⁰²

The generosity of early private collectors is evident in the wealth of many of the museums in Britain and Ireland today. In fact, the founding of educational galleries predates many of the larger national museums in these islands, with much of the early private donation of art being to these institutions, which have been seen as having replaced monasteries as repositories for precious objects.¹⁰³ Gifts and acquisitions from local residents and antiquarians provided for the foundation of many of the municipal art galleries: in Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Norwich, Leicester and Leeds.¹⁰⁴ These municipal museums were also encouraged by the 1845 Act for Encouraging the Establishment of Museums in Large Towns, which set out very clearly that institutions were intended to function as a “cure” for the “vices of intoxication among the labouring classes”.¹⁰⁵ Certainly, the years between 1851 and 1862 saw a surge in exhibitions and museum visits, with many of the exhibitions being collaborations between societies, curators, antiquaries, private collectors and occasionally members of the aristocracy.

Against this broader background of collecting, nine individuals stand out as being among the earliest and in some cases the most influential collectors before the twentieth century: Hans Sloane, Horace Walpole, Francis Douce, John Webb, Joseph Mayer, Henry Cole, William Maskell, John Charles Robinson, and Augustus Franks. Each was responsible in some part for bringing the objects of medieval England, and particularly the early medieval ivories, out of private homes and auction houses into the arena of public display.¹⁰⁶ Most of what we know of such collections is scattered in the pages of sale catalogues; only very rarely did the ivories gathered before the mid nineteenth century attract information about their earlier provenance.¹⁰⁷ But purchases identified in this way certainly influenced the buying choices of museum trustees in later years, raising the question of who influenced those early private collectors? Eighteenth century medieval ivory collectors Walpole and Douce, among others, could not have been influenced in their

¹⁰² *Ibid.*: 21.

¹⁰³ Foster, 1998: 19.

¹⁰⁴ Herrmann, 1999: 46.

¹⁰⁵ Caygill & Cherry, 1997: 21.

¹⁰⁶ Foster, 1998: 10-17.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*: 10.

purchases by the same motives as Mayer or Franks in the nineteenth-century.¹⁰⁸ By comparing the dates of contemporary literary sources, alongside museum exhibitions and collection histories, a pattern nevertheless emerges revealing the influence of interests shared by scholars and collectors, as well as a general sense of how the popular interest in the art, and ivories, of Anglo-Saxon England encouraged publication of the subject.

The private collector in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, such as Sloane and Walpole, was most likely to be a man of considerable wealth, conscious of his heritage, who considered the art he collected to be a means of maintaining and enlarging his collection in keeping with personal taste and current fashion. It must be remembered that this important phase of collecting occurred before the development of many museums (and the time-honoured tradition of private donation to them), and so information could only be achieved through the auction houses, of which Christie's (1762), Sotheby's (1744), Phillips (1796) and Foster's (1794) were all founded in England at this time.¹⁰⁹

The earliest collector, Sir Hans Sloane (1660–1753), whose entire collection would found the British Museum in 1753, was most likely influenced in his early medieval collecting by antiquarian publications. Among his collection a list of “things relating to the customs of ancient times” names 1,125 items as being part of his collection,¹¹⁰ of which twenty-eight were ivories bequeathed to the British Museum; these range in date from the twelfth to the seventeenth centuries with provenances in North America, Guinea and Europe,¹¹¹ and a Romanesque ivory seal of St Alban's Abbey, deemed to be one of the most important extant medieval religious ivories.¹¹² Horace Walpole (1717–97), Francis Douce (1757–1834), Joseph Mayer (1803–86), and William Maskell (1814–90), would not

¹⁰⁸ Although Mayer and Franks had direct relationships with the museums in Liverpool and the British Museum respectively, their best-known purchases were private and donated to their museums later in life. For more detailed information see, Mayer, 1856; Gibson, 1994; Caygill & Cherry, 1997.

¹⁰⁹ Beyond the ability to publicise art, the sale catalogues of these auctioneers also record some of the most prestigious sales of private collections in the nineteenth century, providing evidence of the nature of the collections if no private catalogue had been previously commissioned, e.g.: Fonthill Abbey, 1823 (Christie's, revised by Phillips); the Stowe collection, 1848 (Christie's); Strawberry Hill, 1842 (George Robins); Ralph Bernal's sale, 1855 (Christie's); Samuel Rogers' collection, 1856 (Christie's); Lord Northwick's collection, 1859 (Phillips); and the Hamilton Palace sale, 1882 (Christie's); For more, see Elsner & Cardinal, 1994; Caygill & Cherry, 1997; Crane, 2000.

¹¹⁰ Sir Hans Sloane, British Museum website.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² MacGregor, 1984: 47. See also, Brownell, 2001.

only have had Sloane's collection, and its publication as inspiration, but also the work of Winklemann and a proliferation of guides and publications on taste that served as the means by which to learn about the objects they were acquiring.¹¹³ Winckelmann's ideas of "imitating the ancients" played a significant role in the way it described the nature of ancient objects giving them a strong appeal. To eighteenth century collectors like Walpole and Douce, the accumulation of 'ancient' ivories ranging from the first to sixteenth centuries and from all nations must have seemed only natural.¹¹⁴ While Strawberry Hill and Walpole's influence on a Gothic revival in England is usually considered his most lasting contribution, his art collection, which consisted of several thousand objects dispersed through sale in 1842, has been largely ignored – until the recent exhibition on Strawberry Hill at the V&A which featured a number of items drawn together from his collection.¹¹⁵ For over forty years Walpole acquired objects that had storied provenance, eventually publishing *Anecdotes of Painting in England* (1762-80), often considered the first history of English art.¹¹⁶ His collection included four medieval ivories: three draughts and a late twelfth-century comb.¹¹⁷

Francis Douce, the man behind the 'Doucean Museum', however, had the largest overall collection, with seventy-six medieval ivories. It was initially bequeathed to Major General Meyrick in 1834, who published the ivories in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1836.¹¹⁸ His description is unusual in that the dates he assigned to the ivories take the form of "of the time of Edward II", or "of the time of Henry VI", rather than a specific century. Nine are associated with English regal periods, even in the case of the one ivory given a national (and non-British) provenance: a "figure of St Francis in ivory of French work" is nevertheless "of the time of Henry VIII";¹¹⁹ the rest remained unprovenanced. This suggests that Meyrick was attempting to associate the Doucean ivories with historical periods, and even possibly with royal persons, and so implies that he (and Douce) considered them to be objects of considerable social and economic value. The collection

¹¹³ See e.g. Richardson, 1719, 1722; Hogarth, 1753; Reynolds, 1769-1790.

¹¹⁴ See, Herrmann, 1999.

¹¹⁵ Brownell, 2001; Snodin & Roman, 2009.

¹¹⁶ Horace Walpole, V&A Website.

¹¹⁷ Lewis Walpole Library, Website. The Strawberry hill website provides a database initially created for the exhibition *Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill*, Snodin & Roman, 2009.

¹¹⁸ Meyrick, 1836: nos. 1-21, 22-76.

¹¹⁹ Meyrick, 1836: no. 46; the nine ivories dated to specific years or centuries, were nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 24, 36, 57, 74, 75).

was subsequently dispersed by Meyrick with four ivories being donated to the British Museum in 1878,¹²⁰ where they were joined by Walpole's ivory draughtsmen, bought by Augustus Franks at the Magniac sale at Christie's in 1892,¹²¹ and the twelfth-century Romanesque comb donated by one Sir Maurice Rosenheim in 1916.¹²²

The Liverpool Free Public Museum, founded in 1851 (now known as the World Museum in Liverpool) saw its holdings grow significantly in the 1860s with the acquisition of the Fejérváry and Mayer collections. The Fejérváry collection was originally the holding of a "gentleman collector", Gábor Fejérváry (1780-1851), from Hungary, who owned many ivories acquired either as minor purchases or in lieu of repayments of financial loans.¹²³ When Fejérváry died in 1851 his collection passed to his nephew Ferenc Pulszky (1814–1897), a politician and writer who had relocated to England following the Hungarian revolution of 1848; he displayed his uncle's collection in London in 1853 before deciding to sell parts of it in 1855.¹²⁴ At this point, Augustus Franks made a plea to the Trustees at the British Museum for their acquisition but his request was refused on the grounds of lack of funds,¹²⁵ and a few months later Joseph Mayer from Liverpool purchased the collection and published a catalogue with Pulszky in 1856; this was the first such publication to be completely devoted to ivories.¹²⁶ Mayer, a goldsmith and jeweller by trade, was particularly receptive to fine craftsmanship and precious materials, specifically early medieval ivories which were reminiscent of the precious metals and jewels that he dealt with in his daily life. Born into a wealthy bourgeoisie family, his travels and connections with figures such as Josiah Wedgwood, William Roscoe and Charles Roach Smith, allowed him to garner a large collection of Egyptian and classical antiquities which he made available for public viewing in 1852. This was extended in the 1850s when he acquired first the Faussett collection of Anglo-Saxon antiquities from over 800 Kent graves, and then the Fejérváry ivories; for a short while he was also in possession of the Hertz collection of gems.¹²⁷ While the Fejérváry-Mayer collection

¹²⁰ Caygill & Cherry, 1997: 198, n. 30; Dalton, 1909: nos. 326, 404, 406, 408.

¹²¹ Caygill & Cherry, 1997: 198, n. 30; Dalton, 1909: nos. 173-186, 187-201.

¹²² For full provenance see, Lewis Walpole Library, Website.

¹²³ Gibson, 1994: xvii, nos 5-6, 8.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*: xx.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*: xx.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*: xx.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*: xxi.

included various artefact types, the ivories nonetheless formed a significant group of distinct objects and include three that have been variously attributed: a Martyr (Fig. 2.3A),¹²⁸ and the whalebone Presentation at the Temple (Fig. 2.3B),¹²⁹ and the Nativity (cat. 16: Fig. 2.4).¹³⁰ The first two belonged to Mayer; the Presentation was originally a Fejérváry ivory. His collection eventually grew so large that in 1867 he donated it in its entirety to the City of Liverpool. It was to become one of the founding collections of the Walker Art Gallery.¹³¹

Impressive though Mayer's collection was, the largest assemblage of ivories to become a 'founding' collection for a museum was that of William Maskell whose 168 ivories were acquired by the British Museum in 1865 (where they were later joined by the Douce and Walpole ivories);¹³² this included one openwork ivory Anglo-Saxon comb found originally in Wales (Fig. 2.5). The son of a solicitor, Maskell, an ecclesiastical historian and antiquarian, was ordained at an early age and spent his later life following antiquarian pursuits,¹³³ enthusiastically collecting medieval art, specifically ivories.¹³⁴ Overseeing the acquisition of Maskell's collection was Augustus Franks, who joined the Museum as an assistant in the Department of British Antiquities in 1851, and developed the position of the Keeper of British and Medieval Antiquities and Ethnography in 1866.¹³⁵ An avid private collector, his purchases include some of the best-known medieval and Anglo-Saxon ivories. His private collection was essentially eclectic, comprising objects from different time periods and cultures, from ceramics to bookplates and medieval England to Japan. He has been credited with having an ability to see the

¹²⁸ Identified by Beckwith as "English, St Albans or Bury St Edmunds; second quarter of the twelfth century", but Gibson places it in Cologne during the second half of the eleventh century based on Byzantine and Ottonian stylistic models. Beckwith, 1972: cat. 73, ill. 136; Gibson, 1994: cat. 23, pl. XXIII.

¹²⁹ Determined by both Beckwith and Gibson as 'English' and to the mid-twelfth century, however Gibson identifies the piece as whalebone while Beckwith declared it as walrus ivory. Beckwith, 1972: cat. 102, ill. 204; Gibson, 1994: cat. 25, pl. XXVa.

¹³⁰ Identified by both Beckwith and Gibson as 'English' and to the late tenth century. Beckwith, 1972: cat. 26, ill. 56; Gibson, 1994: cat. 15, pl. XVa.

¹³¹ Unfortunately most of the ivories included by Mayer in his founding donation were not documented unless they were originally from the Fejérváry collection. Gibson, 1994: xxi.

¹³² It was considered so important that a special grant from the Treasury was sought for the purchase price of £2,444 as it included examples from the Fejérváry, Debruge-Duménil, Windus, Pugin and Crofton Croker collections. Caygill & Cherry, 1997: 190.

¹³³ Lee, 1893: 413.

¹³⁴ Caygill & Cherry, 1997: 190.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*: 190.

‘unspectacular’ and the ‘importance of an incomplete piece’¹³⁶ as perhaps best evidenced by his most famous acquisition, the early eighth-century ‘Franks Casket’, purchased from a Parisian dealer in 1857 (cat. 2; Fig. 2.2). During his tenure, a number of early medieval ivories were acquired by the Museum, which, in addition to those from the other collections and his own donations, included the eleventh-century pen-case found in the City of London, acquired in 1870 (cat. 57; Fig. 2.6A), and the Lewis chessmen found on the Isle of Lewis and acquired in 1831 (sixty-seven pieces in all, Fig. 2.6B).¹³⁷ Other early medieval ivories collected by the Museum during this period included the Seal-die of Godwin & Godgytha (cat. 51; Fig. 2.7A),¹³⁸ a knife handle (Fig. 2.8A),¹³⁹ a small ivory representing cattle interlaced (Fig. 2.8B),¹⁴⁰ the head of a tau-cross (cat. 21; Fig. 2.9),¹⁴¹ a crosier fragment of the Virgin and Child (cat. 55; Fig. 2.10),¹⁴² and a large series of early draughtsmen.¹⁴³ It would not be until 1883 however that the Anglo-Saxon collection overall would grow to sufficient proportions to warrant its own gallery at the Museum, with the ivories forming a major part of the display. This was despite the view of Antonio Panizzi, the Principle Librarian at the time, who suggested that the British Museum collection as a whole should “cease a little before Justinian” and that the objects of 500-1500 should be located elsewhere.¹⁴⁴ Arguably Franks’ work can be considered, if not as that of “the second founder of the British Museum”,¹⁴⁵ certainly as having expanded the Museum in ways that would allow the study of medieval art, and more importantly the ivories of medieval England, to increase the collection and study of these objects further than had been previously thought possible.

At the V&A, it was Sir Henry Cole and Sir John Charles Robinson who oversaw the development of the institution and its collections following its foundation as the Museum of Manufactures in 1852, before it was moved and renamed the South

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*: 169.

¹³⁷ As the Lewis Chessmen include such a large number of ivory pieces, there are too many acquisition numbers to list here; see the museum website for more details.

¹³⁸ London: British Museum, 1881, 0404.1; Dalton, 1909: 3, cat. 31

¹³⁹ Dalton, 1909: 36, cat. 37. Given by Franks in 1890.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*: 37, cat. 39. Given by Franks in 1885.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*: 33, cat. 32. Given by the Friends of the British Museum, 1903.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*: 35, cat. 34. Given by Franks in 1868.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*: 74-84, cats. 162-224.

¹⁴⁴ Caygill & Cherry, 1997: 170.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: 1.

Kensington Museum in 1857, and (after being rebuilt and expanded) renamed the V&A Museum in 1899.¹⁴⁶ During this time, Cole as the director of the museum, assisted in expanding the collection of ivories prior to Robinson's arrival, but unlike Franks, who collected privately as well as 'officially', Cole's background and association with the Museum (as well as many other projects) did not allow him the funds for 'leisurely' collecting. Nevertheless, his association with Lord Granville and the Prince Consort enabled him to play a significant role in the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the ensuing development of the V&A.¹⁴⁷ Initially he borrowed objects for display from dealers, like John Webb, but eventually purchases were made, among them the Museum's first medieval ivory acquired in 1853, before Robinson's arrival.¹⁴⁸

Robinson, initially trained as an architect of the Gothic Revival, immersed himself in the artistic culture of Paris, becoming a painter, collector and connoisseur before returning to England in 1847.¹⁴⁹ An avid traveller throughout his life, his private collections centred on the products of the 'Gothic age' and Italy, with most of his acquisitions eventually being donated to or purchased by the Museum.¹⁵⁰ He thus had considerable impact on the late Medieval and Italian nature of the Medieval and Renaissance collections at the V&A Museum, but the ivories he selected for the museum were Islamic, bought by him in Leon and Madrid in 1866, and representing a departure from the normally Christian identity of the ivories held by the Museum, as does the Sri Lankan 'Robinson Casket' he obtained in Lisbon before 1888.¹⁵¹

A part of the network of collectors of such early ivories that includes Cole, Franks and Robinson was John Webb, from whom Cole had initially 'borrowed' objects for display at South Kensington. Webb's collection of medieval ivories was generated through his profession as a Bond Street art dealer. The son of a 'gold laceman', Charles Webb, his business in antiquities flourished from 1840-1870.¹⁵² Like Mayer, Webb's upbringing surrounded by examples of his father's delicate decorative work, clearly influenced his choices in collecting large numbers of intricately carved and highly decorated ivories, and

¹⁴⁶ A Brief History of the Museum, V&A Website.

¹⁴⁷ Bonython & Burton, 2003: 5.

¹⁴⁸ Baker & Richardson, 1997.

¹⁴⁹ John Charles Robinson, National Portrait Gallery website.

¹⁵⁰ Burton, 1999: 57.

¹⁵¹ London, V&A Museum: IS.41.1980.

¹⁵² John Webb, V&A Museum website.

it was in this respect that he came to be so closely associated with Cole, Franks and Robinson and the formation of the ivory collections at the British Museum and South Kensington. Increasingly he collaborated on and lent to major exhibitions, like the “Ancient and Medieval Art” exhibition of 1850,¹⁵³ and he would eventually fund his retirement by selling his unsold stock and collection to museums.¹⁵⁴ In the “Special Loans Exhibition” of 1862 organized by Robinson, Franks noted in the catalogue that “Section 2. Carvings in Ivory” showcased 132 carvings “anterior to the thirteenth century”,¹⁵⁵ all of which were lent by Webb.¹⁵⁶ Webb’s extended practice of lending his objects, and then selling them to the museums, is perhaps best illustrated by his purchase of twenty-six lots at the famous Soltykoff sale in Paris (1861), which included a twelfth-century whalebone panel of the Adoration of the Magi that was eventually sold on to the V&A (Fig. 2.11).¹⁵⁷ It is by such means that the national collections at the British Museum, as well as the V&A and Liverpool Museum reflect the extent of the activities and interests of the “founding” collectors and curators.

The earliest exhibitions that showcased the expansion of private collections were displayed by local Societies and Associations,¹⁵⁸ such as the 1844 exhibition of the Revd Bryan Faussett’s collection by his grandson, Dr Godfrey Faussett, at the Archaeological Association’s meeting in Canterbury,¹⁵⁹ and the development of public museums being founded at Universities and on a national level, ensured that the objects of medieval England were brought into the public eye. The Great Exhibition of 1851 perhaps represents the culmination of a growing interest in the public display of art works as part of the ‘public good’, but it also served as an impetus for museum building and design in the decade that followed. Interestingly it followed a ground-breaking exhibition in 1850 by the Society of Arts in Adelphi of “Ancient and Medieval Art” which was intended to introduce the public to the products of “an age too hastily considered dark and barbarous”

¹⁵³ Burton, 1999: 34, 67.

¹⁵⁴ Wainwright, 2002: 63-78.

¹⁵⁵ Robinson, 1863: nos 36-157.

¹⁵⁶ Williamson, 1987: 18-19.

¹⁵⁷ Burton, 1999: 65; Beckwith, 1972: no. 63.

¹⁵⁸ Caygill & Cherry, 1997: 17.

¹⁵⁹ For more information on Faussett and his collection see Wright, 2015. The British Archaeological Association was founded by Charles Roach Smith in 1843.

as worthy of interest and time.¹⁶⁰ Following these exhibitions, the “Art Treasure Exhibition” held in Manchester in 1857 proved a great success,¹⁶¹ while the “Special Loan Exhibition of Medieval Renaissance Works”, orchestrated by Robinson in 1862, displayed nearly 10,000 items that were seen by 900,000 visitors over the course of six months.¹⁶² The Manchester exhibition is of particular interest here, however, as it reveals unequivocally an admiration of medieval ivories, these being described in the catalogue as deserving of:

particular notice, inasmuch as there is certainly no other branch of the Art which can to an equal degree afford us a knowledge of the different styles of successive epochs, of the guiding spirit, dominant ideas, customs, and manners of past ages, from the commencement of the Christian era down to the seventeenth century.¹⁶³

This initial surge of Museum interest in Anglo-Saxon art and ivories in the mid nineteenth century was not maintained, however, with the last quarter of the century witnessing a period of disinterest and general apathy in the early medieval. During this period there were no museum exhibitions on early medieval art (compared with the seven held between 1843 and 1868). While there is no apparent reason for this slump in activity, apart perhaps from sense of ‘over-load’, it is clear that in the latter part of the century, museum interest was focussed elsewhere, whereas in the former both exhibitions and publications flourished, confirming the integral relationship between the two activities; when one falters so does the other.

The first thirty-five years of the twentieth century were notable because, despite the restrictions on economies, travel and loans imposed by WWI, scholarship and museum exhibitions remained steady with three exhibitions on the arts of early medieval England, and twenty catalogues (or general texts) on museum ivory collections held in Germany, France and England being produced.¹⁶⁴ The three museum exhibitions became the forums by which medieval art came to the notice of the wider public: one at the Fitzwilliam Museum in 1908 being devoted to illuminated manuscripts; a second held at the Royal

¹⁶⁰ SAA, 1850: 2.

¹⁶¹ It attracted over 1 million people. Caygill & Cherry, 1997: 19.

¹⁶² Caygill & Cherry, 1997: 19.

¹⁶³ Scharf, 1858.

¹⁶⁴ See e.g., Vöge, 1900; Scherer, 1903; Baldry, 1904; Maskell, 1905; Petković, 1905; Koechlin, 1906; Hearn, 1908; Dalton, 1909; 1912; Goldschmidt, 1914-1926; Volbach, 1922; Longhurst, 1923; Berliner, 1926; Longhurst, 1926; 1927; Scherer, 1931; Baum, 1933.

Academy in 1923 on “British Primitives”; and the third on “English Medieval Art” held at the V&A Museum in 1930.¹⁶⁵

The period, however, also saw significant changes; economic depression, war and the lack of state funding would see the English art market begin to flounder, while collectors among the newer economic elite of industry and finance acquired existing collections being dispersed at auction.¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the establishment of the National Arts Collection Fund in 1903 ensured that art works from England were kept *in* England at this time, while helping the National museums enlarge their holdings when funding from individuals and the State officially ran dry.¹⁶⁷

Such practices were in marked contrast to that elsewhere in Europe. In England, the fact that the British royal family has occupied the throne almost continuously has meant that royal collections remained in royal hands, while elsewhere such possessions provided the basis for state galleries, whether donated (as in Austria) or confiscated (as in France or Russia).¹⁶⁸ The ‘national’ collections in England came into being through ‘purchases’: the National Gallery and the British Museum both started as private collections purchased by the State. The system of government in Britain did not encourage public collecting or ambitious museum building programs but rather proceeded from the viewpoint that if expenditure should be needed for the acquisition of art, books or scientific specimens for public benefit, it should be done with as little cost as possible to the State.¹⁶⁹

Despite these attitudes, it is clear from the collection of these objects by private individuals (and most often their later gifting of the ivories to the major museums across the country) that some in the art world recognized their importance in the history of the arts. Nevertheless, while much of the scholarship on the Anglo-Saxon ivories has been reluctant to identify them as such, and turned instead to continental points of origin, the study of ivories produced in Europe generally is relevant to those created by Anglo-Saxon artists because of the long standing tradition of association, appropriation and influence that historically flowed back and forth across the English Channel in the early middle

¹⁶⁵ Maclagan & V&A Museum, 1930.

¹⁶⁶ Caygill & Cherry, 1997: 7.

¹⁶⁷ See further MacColl, 1928.

¹⁶⁸ Foster, 1998: 14.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*: 14.

ages; it is these processes that have been enthusiastically invoked in the scholarship when little to no provenance was available to provide stronger evidence of production on either side of the Channel.

2.4 From Collection to Publishing: The Institutional and Scholarly Responses to Anglo-Saxon Ivories

From this review of the publication and collection of Anglo-Saxon art it is clear that the ivory carvings have not generated a constant or lasting interest. While not being totally ignored, the ivories have been almost completely relegated to entries in catalogues inspired by museum collecting and exhibitions, while following the methodological precedents found in texts on Anglo-Saxon art generally, with more journal articles on the subject than monographs. The average number of ivories included within general studies of Anglo-Saxon art (before 1950) is at most, three.¹⁷⁰ This apathy is notable when set against the vast scholarship on other media from Anglo-Saxon England and the attention paid to early medieval continental ivories. In this respect the tendency to compare or even label ivories with the products of cultures other than Anglo-Saxon (namely, Carolingian, Ottonian, or Byzantine), has been seriously problematic.

It has meant that while so many ivory collections were entering the wider holdings of the British Museum, the V&A and the Liverpool Museum, and were being prominently displayed in exhibitions, some authors barely acknowledged their Anglo-Saxon origins, labelling the ivories as “English”, “barbaric”, “Celtic” or created by artists who simply copied the artistic trends of the Continent. Matthew Digby Wyatt’s “Address at the Crystal Palace on Ancient Ivory Carving”, and “Notes on Sculpture in Ivory” of 1855 and 1856 respectively, both acknowledged the intrinsic value of the surviving early ivories but, significantly for later scholarship, called on his audience to direct their attention to these objects as:

illustrative of the decline and fall of *Roman* sculpture; as the principal monuments in which the artistic Hagiology of the *East*, and its legendary faith, varying from age to age, are recorded; as presenting the most complete picture of the *Carlovingian* escape from tradition; and as the most copious commentary on the spiritual and

¹⁷⁰ See below, Conclusion.

romantic life of the Middle Ages, which the art of sculpture has bequeathed to us (italics added).¹⁷¹

The focus on Rome was clearly not new, but the comparison with Carolingian and Byzantine art is an early articulation of associations that would mark the scholarship for the next century and a half, while at the same time, ignoring, or downplaying, the carved ivory productions of early medieval England as Anglo-Saxon.¹⁷²

When Wyatt claimed the “English” style as marked by “sober earnestness of expression in serious action” in comparison to the works of the Carolingian Empire,¹⁷³ he failed to refer to the Anglo-Saxons, but this was in keeping with the terminology invoked at this time. Pulsky’s *Catalogue of the Fejérváry Ivories* also published in 1856, made no mention of “Anglo-Saxon” but labelled one of the ivories as “English”.¹⁷⁴ By 1872, when Maskell published his *Ivories, Ancient and Medieval in the South Kensington Museum*, the situation had changed slightly; he argued that the most important ivories produced before the seventh century were the imperial and late antique consular diptychs and so only mentions four or five “English” ivories, but these included two pieces of “Anglo-Saxon” work – identified as such in relation to the style of the pieces.¹⁷⁵ Four years later Westwood produced his catalogue of the *Fictile Ivories in the South Kensington Museum* which described many casts of ivories (some of the originals of which belonged to other institutions) and examined eight ivories of early medieval date, six of which were linked to the Carolingian Empire but two were termed “Anglo-Saxon”.¹⁷⁶

It was a trend that continued into the early twentieth century when catalogues of ivories continued to be produced with the same enthusiasm (and lack of regard for Anglo-Saxon ivories), seemingly inspired by the publications of the late nineteenth century, particularly Vöge’s catalogue of the ivory carvings in the Berlin collection, and an

¹⁷¹ Wyatt, 1856: 1.

¹⁷² For an interesting article on the relation (and difference), see Ward-Perkins, 2000: 513-33.

¹⁷³ Wyatt, 1856: 16-17.

¹⁷⁴ Mayer, 1856. Most ivories in this catalogue were grouped according to national origin, but some were not given a date or provenance, only a simple formal description.

¹⁷⁵ Maskell, 1875: 22; Mayer, 1856 also used style and iconography to support his dating of English ivories.

¹⁷⁶ Westwood, 1876: 115, 138, 282, 479. Several other collections of ivories were published in Europe and America at this time, but these either failed to mention Anglo-Saxon pieces, despite their presence in the collections, or they linked them to continental centres of production; see Scharf, 1858; Schaefer, 1872; Maskell, 1872; Meyer, 1879; Dura, 1880; Friedrich, 1883; Spitzer, 1890; Molinier, 1896; Stuhlfauth, 1896; Weizsäcker, 1896; Graeven, 1898.

increasing use of photographs (for which Graeven's 1898 *Frühchristliche und mittelalterliche Elfenbeinwerke in photographischer Nachbildung* had set the standard with its 151 gelatin silver photographs).¹⁷⁷ In Belgium, the Musées Royaux des Arts Decoratifs enlisted the talents of Joseph Destrée in 1902 to publish *Catalogue des ivoires, des objets en nacre en os grave et en cire peinte*.¹⁷⁸ This was followed by Anna Cust, who devoted some time to the Anglo-Saxons and their "Keltic teachers" in her *Ivory Workers in the Middle Ages* (1902),¹⁷⁹ and Goldschmidt's *Frühmittelalterliche Elfenbeinskulpturen* in 1903, with Christian Scherer's treatise on Renaissance ivories published in the same year.¹⁸⁰ In 1904 Alfred Baldry published the ivories in *The Wallace Collection at Hertford House*, and Alfred Maskell produced a monograph on *Ivories (Connoisseur Library)* in 1905, which was followed by Petkovic's catalogue of the ivories in Munich's national museum,¹⁸¹ a catalogue of the Hearn collection in America (1908), and Dalton's overview for the British Museum of their entire ivory collection in his 1909 would round out the first decade of the twentieth century.¹⁸²

Although such publications mark a change in attitude towards medieval ivories generally in museums, these early twentieth-century works followed those of the late nineteenth century in the lack of interest in Anglo-Saxon ivories with their citation of these objects being limited to those that had been previously published: namely, the Lewis chessmen and the Franks Casket. Furthermore, with the exception of Maskell and Cust's work, these publications were primarily catalogues. The Anglo-Saxon ivories, therefore (if they were included), received only brief entries accompanied by a slim introduction to the history of ivory produced by Roman, Carolingian, Ottonian and/or Byzantine artists; little effort was made to construct a wider context for the Anglo-Saxon objects. Unlike scholars of the last sixty years, who have devoted much of their careers to researching the provenance and context of medieval objects with little or no explicit information beyond the last few owners or the archaeological find site, authors of the late nineteenth and early

¹⁷⁷ Graeven, 1898.

¹⁷⁸ Destrée, 1902.

¹⁷⁹ Cust, 1902: 102.

¹⁸⁰ Scherer, 1903.

¹⁸¹ Petkovic, 1905.

¹⁸² Dalton, 1909.

twentieth centuries mixed objects of different cultural origins and style with little apparent consideration for the details of their attributions.

The general exception to this trend lay in journal articles which provided individual studies of ivory and bone objects: Franks' "Carved bone disk" in 1866; Anderson's description of a Celtic whale bone casket in 1886,¹⁸³ and Cottrill's examination of bone draughtsmen of the Saxon period found in a grave mound in Derbyshire of the same year.¹⁸⁴ The first decade of the twentieth century saw a continuation of this journal-heavy tendency while the more substantive publications continued to pay little attention to these Anglo-Saxon objects: Charles Read's article of 1903 shows a profound interest for the artistic production of "the art of our Saxon forefathers" and describes the "exceptional grace" of the tau-cross newly acquired by the British Museum (cat. 21; Fig. 2.9) amongst other Saxon artefacts whose "technical ability far surpassed their continental cousins of the later Christian times."¹⁸⁵ In this he reflects the growing interest in evolutionary theory that perceived nationalism to be the result of the evolution of human identity with specific group types, which resulted in the foundation of nations and national group attachments that were thought to be unique, emotional, intense and durable because they were based on kinship and promoted along lines of common ancestry.¹⁸⁶

In this context, Goldschmidt's four-volume corpus of medieval ivories produced between 1914 and 1926 represents a remarkable feat, particularly considering the geopolitical climate of the time. Otto Pelka's *Elfenbein* of 1920 likewise examines a great number of ivories and acknowledges "England", but only in the context of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹⁸⁷ Less well known, although arguably of more interest in the context of this study, Margaret Longhurst's publications of 1926 and 1927 openly recognised the flaws of previous scholarship and its lack of interest in the Anglo-Saxon carvings, noting "writers have either denied their existence except for a few isolated examples or ascribed numerous examples when they are obviously foreign."¹⁸⁸ Her

¹⁸³ Anderson, 1886: 390-6.

¹⁸⁴ Cottrill, 1931: 276.

¹⁸⁵ Read, 1903: 407-12; Beckwith, 1972: cat. 29.

¹⁸⁶ Motyl, 2001: 251, 273.

¹⁸⁷ It must be noted that Pelka does include the Genoels-Elderen ivory (but only the Christ in Majesty panel, cat. 5) and the Alcester Tau-Cross (cat. 21; Pelka, 1920: panel 91, pl. 51 and 161, pl. 106), but neither are mentioned in connection with Britain, Ireland or the Anglo-Saxons.

¹⁸⁸ Longhurst, 1926: 62.

catalogue of *English Ivories* (1926) thus identified forty-three ivories as Anglo-Saxon while the first volume of her *Catalogue of Carvings in Ivory* (1927), which covered the carvings “Up to the thirteenth-century”, cited twelve examples of ‘English’ ivories at the V&A, ranging in date from the ninth to twelfth centuries. At the time, this represented publication of the largest group of Anglo-Saxon ivories acknowledged as such before Beckwith’s publications of 1972 and exhibition in 1974.

The last sixty years have seen the publication of only those pieces selected to represent the era within more general texts on Anglo-Saxon art (if included at all): namely, the Franks casket (cat. 2; Fig. 2.2), the Lewis chessmen (Fig. 2.6B), the Genoels-Elderen diptych (cat. 5 ; Fig. 2.12) and the Gandersheim Casket (cat. 6, Fig. 2.13). Dodwell, remarkably, included nine references to twelve specific Anglo-Saxon ivories, all of which were *positively* reinforced with reference to documentary evidence.¹⁸⁹ Since this time, an average of only eight Anglo-Saxon ivories is mentioned within studies of Anglo-Saxon art, and there is still no attempt to contextualise them, although the types of information available, analysis and new arguments have developed exponentially. It is the hope that this study will improve this situation.

2.5 Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter has been to review the historiography of scholarship devoted to Anglo-Saxon ivories, situated within the study of Anglo-Saxon art generally and the substantial field of Art History against the background of social and international changes. Through this it has become clear that despite the developments made in methodological approaches and the work of generations of scholars, scholarly work on ivories in catalogues, museum exhibitions and journal articles and the occasional (rare) monograph, the Anglo-Saxon ivories have been relegated to brief analysis (at best) or complete disregard, while the artistic creations of the Continent and Mediterranean have attracted praise and extensive research.

While scholarly texts under the heading of “Anglo-Saxon art” and “Medieval Art” before Beckwith’s *Ivories of Early Medieval England* (1972) included a mere three to four Anglo-Saxon ivories on average, after 1972 this number rose to eight, not including those ivories included in catalogues, museum exhibitions, monographs (on ivories or specific

¹⁸⁹ Dodwell, 1982: 41, 108, 141, 171, 190, 197, 198, 200-201, 202; see further, Chapter 3.

Empires or cultures) or collections of essays on ivories and/or medieval ivories generally. By ignoring these objects, or confining their existence to catalogue entries (written over forty years ago), scholars have allowed an entire area of art history to be forgotten, creating a void in the literature where these ivories might shed light. The delicate balance of style, iconography, cultural and international influence playing out across these objects is important to understanding the fabric of not only Anglo-Saxon life, but that of the social and cultural exchanges that happened across the wider tableaux of early medieval Europe. The following chapters will expand upon some of the multidisciplinary ways in which this can be achieved, namely through social and cultural studies, economics, archaeology, anthropology, style and iconography.

CHAPTER 3

PERCEPTIONS OF IVORY IN ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND: A QUESTION OF MEDIUM AND ECONOMICS

3.1 Introduction

Having set the Anglo-Saxon ivories within the context of the wider scholarly interest, it is notable (although perhaps not surprising), that to date there has been no art historical analysis of how ivory was perceived as a material in Anglo-Saxon England, the general inclination being to ignore the ivories unless invoking them to contextualize a line of stylistic or iconographic argument,¹⁹⁰ or discussing the perceived Anglo-Saxon tendency to imitate and emulate late antique and early medieval continental motifs.¹⁹¹ While catalogue entries have attributed potential dates and provenances for the carved ivories,¹⁹² reports on the archaeological evidence for the trade and distribution of ivory in Anglo-Saxon England in particular, haven't been brought together and there has been little attempt to synthesise the implications of these studies in the art historical accounts.¹⁹³ Furthermore, despite clear evidence that the Church, royal diplomacy, patronage, art and trade linked Anglo-Saxon England and the Continent, little has been done to bring such scholarship to bear in consideration of the ivories of early medieval England.¹⁹⁴

It is the aim here to bring together not only the results of the work of art historians and archaeologists in relation to ivory, but also to place their findings within a larger contextual landscape of international relations reflected in economics, trade and literary accounts. Thus, the Anglo-Saxon carved ivories will be examined alongside records of waste material, fragmentary finds and burial objects that have been recovered archaeologically, exploring the material's survival and how it might have impacted on the activities of the Anglo-Saxon carvers and gives a sense of the place of such creativity within a wider artistic and geographical context. Following a brief discussion of the trade

¹⁹⁰ See Chapters 4 & 5.

¹⁹¹ See Chapter 2.

¹⁹² See e.g., Longhurst, 1927; Beckwith, 1972; Williamson, 2010.

¹⁹³ See e.g., Cutler, 1985; 1987: 431-76; Gardiner, 1997: 173-95; Roesdahl, 2005: 182-91.

¹⁹⁴ See e.g., Szarmach & Rosenthal, 1997; Hines, 1998; Story, 2003.

in ivory generally, and a broad (scientific) examination of the organic differences between the ivory types covered in this study, this chapter will analyse Anglo-Saxon elephant, whalebone and walrus ivory in the light of archaeological evidence, alongside extant (carved and un-carved) objects and the potential means by which each ivory type reached the region, the economic and commercial implications of each ivory type in early medieval England, and finally, the evidence (literary or otherwise) for the development, persistence and legacy of perceptions of the ivories circulating in Anglo-Saxon England.

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the research for this discussion, each type of ivory, its animal sources, its survival (archaeologically), and its international commercial background will be examined in chronological order of its use as the extant Anglo-Saxon ivories present different stories of use and disuse dependent upon availability and popularity. Here, it is important to consider the different types of ivory most often used by early medieval carvers as they were often used for objects deemed to bear different values. Examining the extant elephant and walrus carvings alongside the examples of whalebone and unidentified bone, will thus allow for a better understanding not only of the carved material itself but also of the contexts informing the production of ivory carving in Anglo-Saxon England.

As outlined,¹⁹⁵ the art historical discussion of Anglo-Saxon ivories focuses, unsurprisingly, on those carved in relief, whether secular or ecclesiastical, involving figural or animal subjects set amongst scroll patterns or stylized borders. The last twenty years or so have, however, seen the rise of more multi-disciplinary approaches to the subject, particularly among archaeologists and economic historians whose findings highlight the more everyday occurrences of ivory, or its waste, revealed in the course of excavation. This avenue of research has been fruitful in examining the spread of ivory across early medieval Britain and Ireland; if considered alongside current scholarly speculation on early medieval trade routes and socio-economic theories regarding the importance of precious materials, it thus provides a basis for research into the role of ivory production and trade in Anglo-Saxon England as well as some indications about the possible origins of pieces lacking clear provenance.

The archaeological record of ivory is, of course, prolific in terms of past, present and unpublished reports, and discussion of it, in itself, is not the purpose of this study, but

¹⁹⁵ See Chapter 2.

one major issue needs to be noted: namely that not all examples of ivory noted by the excavators are identified correctly, neither at the time of excavation, nor post-excavation. Such issues will of course impact detailed information regarding the general spread and popularity of ivory use in graves and waste sites. Yet with this caveat in mind, there still remains a significant body of ivory artefacts that provide evidence for a wealth-driven ivory trade in Anglo-Saxon England. This becomes clear when the archaeological evidence from the region is considered in the light of the commercial activity of the early medieval period more widely, for this in turn, demonstrates a clear chronological ebb and flow of supply, demand and levels of value linked to the medium of ivory. This is perhaps best explained by the relative availability of ivory, which was unequivocally related to cost and value, and directly affected its ‘horizontal’ distribution across Europe and into England (in terms of the export and transmission of models), as well as its ‘vertical’ distribution through society from merchants to artisans to wealthy courts and ecclesiastical centres.¹⁹⁶

Many of the Anglo-Saxon archaeological sites have been related to international trade and sister sites on the Continent and thus allow for a discussion of how, when and why ivory may have made its way to England in the early medieval period. As the three main sources of ivory utilised by Anglo-Saxon carvers were not sourced locally, each provides its own unique set of considerations in terms of identification, preference, availability, artistic creativity and survival in the light of the scarcity of contemporary documentation. Such rare written sources provide a glimpse into Anglo-Saxon society where ivory was a part of gift-giving activities (between individuals or institutions), or was actively pursued in the form of hunting for tusks, whereas the amount of ivory recovered by excavation highlights a viable, wealth-driven industry spread over a large geographical area that remained relatively stable throughout the early medieval period. In part, this evidence is the result of advances in scientific analysis over the last forty years that has enabled distinctions to be made between domestic (and domesticated) animal bones and ivory.

Finally, in exploring concepts of value and luxury in connection with ivory, it is important to situate the Anglo-Saxon response within the literary traditions in which they were being articulated, traditions that were established in biblical and late antique sources

¹⁹⁶ Cutler, 1987: 431.

but which were circulating in Anglo-Saxon England. Expressions of admiration for ivory were well established as a literary motif in antiquity and served as a textual leitmotif in the literature produced in Anglo-Saxon England. Along the same lines, the concepts of myth and legend invested the animal sources (elephant, whale and walrus) with a status that informed moral and religious themes within accounts of the wider natural world. As such, these articulations can be set against the persistent use of ivory as a luxury good in Anglo-Saxon England, suggesting that the material itself, and the literary accounts, may have reinforced each other.

3.2 The Trade in Ivory: an Overview

There are no exclusive studies of the ‘how’ and ‘when’ ivory reached Anglo-Saxon England, however publications on wider trade and commercial transactions in early medieval Britain and Ireland have focused on archaeological finds as economic markers and emerged primarily from European archaeological scholarship, as prior to 1956, the study of ‘Dark Age Trade’ in England was not deemed relevant. With the foundation of the Medieval Archaeology Society in England (1956) by John Hurst and David Wilson, the study of post-Roman archaeology improved, as highlighted in Gerald Dunning’s 1956 analysis of imported pottery which identified the economy in England after the ‘pagan’ period, and opened up the possibility of studying the origins of English towns and mercantile history for the first time in England.¹⁹⁷ Dunning’s article, and the realisation in Britain that there were emporia in Hamwic, Southampton, York and London to rival those found on the Continent, not only led to a reworking of cross-Channel trade relations of the early medieval period, but also highlighted the importance of the long distance connections of ninth-century kingdoms that were attempting to design new competitive market systems.¹⁹⁸ The importance of this study here lies in the fact that Dunning’s focused analysis of the development of trade and the economic market in Anglo-Saxon towns provides the foundation on which the archaeological and economic value of ivory in this study can be built.

The extensive archaeological remains found in Britain and Ireland since the 1980s has meant that the model of trade transition and development used by Dunning and

¹⁹⁷ Hodges, 2008: 113.

¹⁹⁸ Hodges, 1990: 205.

Hodges to describe Europe generally can now be set out more specifically to illustrate the economic transformation in Anglo-Saxon England as it might pertain to the trade in ivory:¹⁹⁹

1. The Roman economic collapse led to local regional economic relations based on domestic production of goods,²⁰⁰ however the archaeological evidence provides a broader picture of a significant demand for luxury goods still being traded into the inner regions of Anglo-Saxon England, including elephant ivory rings (showing up as early as *c.*450).
2. About 500 Kent and Wessex fall within the sphere of prestige goods exchange stemming from northern France, while eastern England came within the field of Rhenish and Scandinavian trade,²⁰¹ which would have provided the impetus for trade in stock fish, and later luxury northern goods.
3. With the rise of the Merovingian economy in 600, prestige goods increased in volume and circulation, as evidenced by the Type A gateway community found in Ipswich, which holds one of the largest groupings of whalebone waste material and provides much of the evidence for its use and distribution between *c.*650-850.²⁰²
4. Changes begin to occur with the rise of the Hamwic emporia in *c.* 690, a Type B gateway community that appears to have been modelled after Frankish sites like Dorestad or Quentovic.²⁰³
5. Kent, London, York and Northumbria, while permanently occupied towns, followed in the same patterns as Ipswich, concerned primarily with production of commodities, allowing for the larger, more technically complex ivories to be carved in the eighth century.²⁰⁴
6. By 800 the Anglo-Saxons seemingly fall in line with Europe-wide developments, producing more uniform trading patterns,²⁰⁵ and likely

¹⁹⁹ The following model is based on my own observations and research, reworking Hodges' model to fit in the light of this study. The points that belong to him are footnoted as appropriate.

²⁰⁰ Hodges, 1990: 208.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*; 208.

²⁰² For more see below, Section 3.2b.

²⁰³ Hodges, 1990: 213.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*; 210, 212. See below, Fig. 3.9, Section 3.2a for more.

²⁰⁵ Hodges, 1990: 206-7.

influenced the shipments of elephant ivory (late-eighth and later-ninth century) and the extensive use of whalebone ivory.

7. *Contra* Hodges, the evidence produced in this study through the ivories is supported by the cross-Channel traffic between Anglo-Saxon missionaries and royal connections, which would come under the flourishing Rhenish and Frisian networks in the Carolingian era, encouraging long-distance trade that would bring goods from across Europe and the North Sea, specifically the influx of walrus ivory, from c.900 to the end of the Anglo-Saxon period.

Taking this trade pattern, along with the archaeological evidence examined further below, it will be demonstrated that each type of ivory used by Anglo-Saxon craftsmen was significant in the luxury goods market throughout the early medieval period. Overall it will be seen that the trade in ivory, even in post-Roman England, was part of a continuous process of commercial activity, revealed not only by the continued appearance of elephant ivory in burials, but also by the development of new ports and trading processes.²⁰⁶ These developments had two direct and interdependent consequences: first, they led to travel and relocation by those involved in the supply of such exotica; and second, they led to the establishment of new trading centres or markets in Scandinavia and around the Baltic.²⁰⁷ A thorough examination of these processes, as well as the most likely routes of travel, is primary in the attempt to understand how, in the absence of documentary evidence, ivory reached Anglo-Saxon England.

Certainly the conditions in which luxury goods such as ivory were traded and shipped during the sixth to eleventh centuries is difficult to ascertain due to the convoluted nature of maritime traffic in the early medieval period, involving many processes of exchange, transfer and supply. Nevertheless, analysing known trade routes, import and export practises as well as opportunistic access and the practice of gift giving involving Anglo-Saxon ivory indicate that desire and demand for the material was sufficiently high within artistic and cultural circles to necessitate its international importation, alongside the other materials moving back and forth across the Channel and the North Sea, from the Roman departure in the fifth century through to the end of the eleventh century. Exchange, immigration, political emulation and ideological alliances, would all fuel the international

²⁰⁶ Wells, 1992: 43.

²⁰⁷ Sawyer, 1984: 45.

trade over land and sea. According to Seán McGrail, four to five cross-Channel routes between the Continent and Britain and Ireland can be identified through written and excavated evidence as having been used from an early date,²⁰⁸ while natural harbours, such as Weymouth Bay and Poole Harbour, as well as easily accessible inland ‘ports’ through rivers such as the Thames and the Humber, provided waypoints for international trade before more permanent commercial centres were established. Maritime traffic during and immediately following the period of Roman occupation involved a long chain of shipping centres following the Rhine, Seine, Loire and Garonne rivers,²⁰⁹ but with the decline in availability of Mediterranean products, the rise of Christianity and the development of a series of kingships and royalty in Britain and Ireland in the course of the sixth century, the small non-permanent sites that had previously been in use could no longer flourish without protection and patronage from the wealthier royal and ecclesiastical institutions.²¹⁰

Conflicts in eastern Europe in the early seventh century interrupted trade connections from Byzantium to Scandinavia and left a gap in international commercial trading that was filled first by the Frisians (a Germanic ethnic group that occupied the coastal parts of the Netherlands and Germany). The rise in bulk cargo from central Europe in the seventh century required larger storage and permanent containment facilities, allowing for better extraction of tolls and regulation of inland dispersal,²¹¹ while southern goods were ferried up the Rhine to Dorestad and transferred to vessels bound for England and the North Sea ports providing intermediate trade between northern and southern Europe and the Mediterranean for over two centuries.²¹² During the eighth century, Viking expansion and eventual domination of over-sea trade, alongside the stability of the north European marketplace during Charlemagne’s rule, allowed for increased maritime traffic and a rise in royal and ecclesiastical connections between the Anglo-Saxons and the Continent. While the Frisian monopoly was broken in the eighth century with the establishment of two trade routes connecting Norway with Britain and Ireland, and Sweden along Russian rivers to Byzantium and the Islamic world, the early routes continued to be used, albeit in varied guises, as the role of the Channel varied between

²⁰⁸ McGrail, 1990a: 46. See Figs 3.17-3.18.

²⁰⁹ Milne, 1990a: 82.

²¹⁰ Hinton, 1990: 39.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*: 40.

²¹² Ellmers, 1990a: 91.

peaceful communication, trade, piracy and invasion between the eighth and tenth centuries.

While Britain and Ireland could offer (as well as being plundered for) gold, silver, wood, tin, lead, textiles, hunting dogs, slaves and craftsmen, it is most likely the desire for European goods and luxury objects that provided the growing ecclesiastical demands and royal prestige with enhanced social and artistic connections with the royal courts of Europe and Rome.²¹³ The sponsorship of Anglo-Saxon missionary activity by the Carolingian court, as well as the counter flow of contributions towards cultural and political development between Anglo-Saxon England and the Carolingian Empire would allow for an infusion of both cultures in their respective intellectual and artistic activities.²¹⁴ Large courts such as Charlemagne's and Alfred's were thriving artistic centres and would have necessitated large quantities of luxury media (such as ivory, precious metals and stones) to embellish, carve, paint and display the wealth of their patrons, but with a lack of written accounts, and the varying publication record of archaeological sites across Britain and Ireland, it is difficult to conclusively place ivory, let alone ascertain exact figures of its commercial exchange and artistic use, within the larger body of luxury goods crossing the channel and the North Sea during the early medieval period.

This means that considerations of other well-known early medieval commercial enterprises, such as the booming trade in stock fish, the exploitation of materials, and the demand for exotica and gift-giving can be usefully considered to potentially situate the ivory amongst a myriad of products that were sought after at this time.²¹⁵ In fact, archaeological evidence and economic markers suggest that among the material being exploited, the use and trade of walrus ivory played a significant economic role in the early medieval economies of north-western Europe, contributing to a booming North Sea trade, and this evidence can provide information about the role of ivory production and trade in later Anglo-Saxon England. Indeed, as noted, the sources for all types of ivory were not static but rather fluctuated significantly due to supply and geopolitical conditions.

²¹³ Hinton, 1990: 30, 36.

²¹⁴ Story, 2003: 2.

²¹⁵ For more see: Sawyer, 1981; Callmer, 1994; Perdikaris & McGovern, 2007: 193-216; Keller, 2008.

In the light of this overview of maritime trade that included ivory, it is necessary to consider in more detail its materiality and mercantile value, in order to undertake a considered investigation of the cultural and social perception of the value of ivory in Anglo-Saxon England.

3.3 The Material of Ivory

The modern dictionary definition of ivory describes a “hard creamy white modified dentine that comprises the tusks of a tusked mammal,” and encompasses a wide range of species, including hippopotamus, wild pig and mammoth, yet it remains the case that the most popular tusked animals from which this material springs, which was also the case in Anglo-Saxon England, is elephant and walrus. Interestingly, as will be shown below, the use of whalebone within the region was significant, so much so that it provided a useful and valuable replacement for elephant and walrus ivory, and will be considered here as a form of ‘ivory’ in its own right. Of the fifty-seven catalogued entries in this study cited as belonging to early medieval England pre-dating the mid eleventh century, thirty-five have been identified as walrus ivory, only fourteen are identified as elephant ivory and five are of whalebone.²¹⁶

Present day identification of different types of carved ivory relies heavily on macroscopic and microscopic characteristics as well as ultraviolet light, although physical measurements such as width, height and diameter are used on a less scientific basis to narrow the field of possibilities due to known species’ tusk diameter and length averages. Ivory as an organic material has an oily feel and is most often dried before it is carved, although it is possible to carve a ‘green’ or fresh piece of ivory; this, however can cause cracks as the piece dries out.²¹⁷ Obviously, microscopic identification was unavailable, and most likely not of interest, to early medieval carvers which leaves open the question of how important knowledge of the *type* of ivory was to an Anglo-Saxon carver.

²¹⁶ For full details of these ivories, see the catalogue in vol. II. Note that some catalogue entries (specifically cat. 2, 5, 6, 13, 14, 15, 20, 30, 47, 53, 57) have more than one physical object or panel; these have been numbered here as part of a singular entry rather than multiple pieces, see more below.

²¹⁷ Shalem, 2004: 16.

African elephants (*Loxodonta Africana*),²¹⁸ both male and female, carry tusks that can extend to about 3.5m in length (with length being an inherited characteristic) and about one third of their total length lies hidden inside the skull (Fig. 3.1). When elephant ivory came to be scarce in the eighth and ninth centuries whalebone was used uniquely, and opportunistically, as an ivory substitute in Anglo-Saxon England.²¹⁹ There are twenty-three species of cetaceans (marine mammals that include whales, porpoises and dolphins) found in British waters, but what makes cetaceans special among vertebrates is the enormous oil reserves that are held in their soft tissue and bones (Fig. 3.2).²²⁰ Scientific studies have considered in some detail the importance of the oil content of whalebones,²²¹ but this knowledge would not have been available in the early medieval period. Rather the clear visible differences in bone marrow colour (with red marrow having a low lipid content and yellow marrow consisting of a high lipid content) would have been immediately apparent to the Anglo-Saxons accessing the material and therefore (possibly after some trial and error) an awareness of what bones would have been most useful would likely have become commonplace. If the bone was not used for fuel or other utilitarian purposes, it would have had to have been dried for weeks or months in order that other materials brought into contact with it would not have been damaged or contaminated by the oil seeping from the whalebone. Examination of the extant carved pieces, certainly demonstrates an awareness of such processes and thus implies a certain amount of patience was involved in processing objects made from whalebone.

Walrus tusks, the third and final ivory type used by Anglo-Saxon craftsmen, are different to their elephantine counterparts, not only in section, being more oval shaped, but

²¹⁸ Textual sources indicate that both African and Asian elephant tusks were available to merchants in the Mediterranean to trade and export to the Continent and elsewhere, but as no identification (formal or otherwise) has ever been made concerning the Anglo-Saxon elephant ivories, this discussion will focus on African tusks, the most commonly available in the early medieval period (Shalem, 2004: 16); see further Section 3.3a.

²¹⁹ While there is evidence of the use of whalebone in other countries during this period, it has been suggested that of the extant carved whalebone objects in the world, all are of English origin. Longhurst, 1926: v.

²²⁰ Higgs et al., 2011: 3.

²²¹ Recent studies have shown that the lipid (oil) content in whalebone shows marked differences between different parts of the body, such as the upper and lower jaw (upper increasing in lipid content closer to the skull, lower having a lower average percent of lipids throughout), the vertebral column (decreasing in the cervical and thoracic vertebrae but increasing greatly in the lumbar and caudal vertebrae), and the bones of the chest region (scapula, sternum and ribs generally ranging between 15-30% lipid content). See further, Higgs et al., 2011.

also in size, ranging typically between 3-4cm in diameter at their base near the jaw, narrowing towards the tip and growing up to a metre in length.²²² The material has a fine surface with a soapy texture and cannot be carved to any great depth without presenting the oatmeal-like pulp matter below the dentine (Fig. 3.3A),²²³ which can run to a depth (down the length of the tusk) between 1-8cm, taking the average tusk diameter down to a mere 1-3cm available for carving, which causes some questions to be raised concerning some of the objects identified as walrus ivory in this study.²²⁴ As walrus ivory was only used for a short period of time in Anglo-Saxon England (c.900–1066) before the Norman Conquest,²²⁵ there is very little in the way of archaeological material but it does survive in considerable numbers in carved form.²²⁶

Regardless of which species a piece of ivory derives, its creamy colour, smoothness to the touch, fine grain and relative ease in carving, exotic and luxurious connotations and remarkable durability have given it a coveted place in a long list of precious substances; of all the treasured media in the world today, ivory has been regarded as a precious medium longer than others, such as amber, jade, gold and other costly metals.²²⁷ It is exactly this popularity and organic make-up that has allowed carved ivory objects to survive in such great numbers, over precious metals for instance, which could be melted down and reused. It is clear from the extant evidence that ivory and bone have both provided an adequate, and at times preferred, material for comparatively utilitarian purposes in Anglo-Saxon England, being popular for knife handles, and chopping boards as well as items such as game pieces and jewellery boxes.

²²² Hills, 2001: 134.

²²³ Gaborit-Chopin, 1992: 204; Roesdahl, 2007: 92. For more see below, section 3.3c and Appendix II, Fig. 3.4B,C.

²²⁴ These statements are based on my own research into the modern practice of tusk carving, as well as analysis of the size and shape of many of the walrus ivory panels in this study. For more see below, section 3.3c.

²²⁵ Walrus ivory was heavily used after the Norman Conquest in Romanesque and Anglo-Norman carvings, but these lie beyond the scope of this study. See further: Beckwith, 1972: chapters II, III, 27-110, cats. 58–166.

²²⁶ See further below.

²²⁷ Clark, 1986: fig. 2.

3.3a Elephant Ivory in Anglo-Saxon England

While the availability of all types of ivory fluctuated in the early medieval period, due to variations in supply, demand and geopolitical tensions, elephant ivory was always popular, whether from African or Asian sources. Its comparatively generous proportions and availability through Mediterranean, Asian and African ports facilitated its wide distribution across Europe. Given this, it is perhaps surprising that of the various types of ivory available to Anglo-Saxon craftsmen, elephant ivory as a whole was perhaps not the best known. While it had been a highly popular medium in Europe and Asia since antiquity for objects of both high status and everyday use, archaeological evidence and the extant carved pieces present a different story in Anglo-Saxon England (Fig. 3.4).

Most of the evidence for this is found in sub-Roman and early medieval cemeteries spread across Britain and Ireland in the form of ivory rings, and is corroborated by examples in continental Europe, and as far away as Ethiopia.²²⁸ Indeed various artefacts recovered from Anglo-Saxon graves show how far reaching, and diverse, were the places and cultures from which objects came before being buried alongside their owners and it is in this context that the ivory can be considered, alongside other luxury imports from the Continent from the fifth century onwards. In this respect, Jeremy Huggett's study of the distribution patterns of several types of artefacts across Britain in 1988 is of considerable importance to interpreting the many archaeological sites and their artefacts, when little sense could be made of the variety and spread of such objects.²²⁹ His work, and Catherine Hills' subsequent reworking of it in 2001, both note the striking number of a particular ivory artefact-type: elephant ivory rings (Fig. 3.5A-B), which have been found in at least seventy sites across England and the Continent, with most being found in England (Fig. 3.6).²³⁰ While Huggett seemed unsure as to whether the rings were elephant ivory, Hills'

²²⁸ Hills, 2001: 132.

²²⁹ Huggett, 1988: 63–96.

²³⁰ Fig. 3.7 after Huggett, 1988: 69, fig. 3. Evison (1987: 269-70, fig. 118) lists fifty-two sites containing ivory rings across England; Huggett (1988: 68) notes 112 ivory rings in sixty-two cemeteries, ranging between the fifth and seventh centuries. The highest concentration is found at Lackford (Sf.) with thirteen rings, followed by Illington (Nf.) with seven rings, and Caistor-by-Norwich (Nf.), Sleaford (Lincs.), Spong Hill (Nf.), and Dover (Kent) each with five rings (Fig. 3). There is never more than one ring per burial; Hills (2001: 132, fig. 6.3) does not identify the "over 70" sites on the Continent but shows three cremation cemeteries (Schmalstede, Issendorf & Pritzler) in northern Germany and cites publications by Schuldt, 1955; Vogt, 1960; Saggau, 1986; Wahl, 1988; Jørgensen, 1992; Weber, 1996; Bode, 1998a, 1998b.

analysis demonstrates that they were indeed elephantine as they average between 10-15cm in diameter.²³¹ They are found in both cremation and inhumation burials dating from the fifth to late seventh centuries, with the earliest most likely from Glen Parva, Leicestershire (late fifth to early sixth century) and the latest from Dover, dated to *c.*670 if not later.²³²

Interestingly, at Jarrow Monastery, a small lidded cylindrical box (H2.1cm Diam. 1.7cm) made of elephant ivory was found in an archaeological deposit giving rise to the possibility of these objects being part of a group of celebrated objects being carried from the late Roman world, perhaps alongside other *spolia*, like that found in the Hoxne Hoard.²³³ Seemingly emulating Roman and Byzantine *pyxides* (Fig. 3.7A), this ivory is unusual, as small objects of this type were not made in northern Europe during the Anglo-Saxon period,²³⁴ most examples of this particular type of circular bodied container with a lid covering a recessed upper moulding belong to the first century AD and were more often made in bone than ivory.²³⁵ Having been widely disseminated across the Roman Empire, the box from Jarrow thus suggests that they were of southern or eastern Mediterranean origin, with a secondary use in Anglo-Saxon England,²³⁶ and represent not only the purposeful reuse of ivory objects in the Anglo-Saxon period, but also, an awareness of their history as imported luxury items and therefore, while not highly decorated, found their way into high-status milieux, such as Jarrow, and represent prestige burial objects.

Moving beyond the archaeological material, of the extant Anglo-Saxon *carved* elephant ivory objects which have been prioritised in the art historical scholarship, nine seem to fall in the years immediately following the Arab expansion in the seventh and eighth centuries, when little ivory was allegedly leaving Africa and Asia.²³⁷ The difference in date between the latest elephant ivory rings found in Dover,²³⁸ and the Cuthbert comb (cat. 1; Fig. 3.7B), perhaps indicates a short discontinuation of elephant ivory supply to Anglo-Saxon England for no more than twenty-five years, if at all. It must be

²³¹ Huggett, 1988: 63–96; Hills, 2001: 134.

²³² *Ibid.*: 138; see also Evison, 1987: 170; Geake, 1997: 81.

²³³ Barber & Bowsher, 2000: 133, 188, fig. 95; Cramp, 2005-2006: II, 275, WB22 (image not available); Riddler, 2006: 275. For more on the Hoxne Hoard, see Bland & Johns, 1993.

²³⁴ Riddler, 2006: 275.

²³⁵ For more information on these objects generally, and their significance, please see Clair, 2003.

²³⁶ Riddler, 2006: 275.

²³⁷ For more in depth discussion, see Cutler, 1985, 1994.

²³⁸ See n. 241.

acknowledged that while the dating of the ivories according to this study does not imply an extended collapse of elephant ivory carving/trade in Anglo-Saxon England, there are visible gaps between the extant seventh- and eighth-century pieces. However, the argument still stands that the timeline of carved/traded ivory was continuous in Anglo-Saxon England as the extant pieces (in dating, technical ability and subject matter) create a picture of relatively uninterrupted desire for the material, and there were likely more objects that do not survive. Interestingly, the extant elephant ivories show a remarkably similar pattern in terms of their size (Table I).

Catalogue Number	Name of Ivory	Date	Height (cm)	Width (cm)
1.	Cuthbert's Comb	Late 7 th century	16.3	11.85
5.	Genoels-Elderen diptych	Last quarter of the eighth century	30	18
7.	Last Judgement/Transfiguration	Late 8 th century	13.2	8.1
8.	Zoomorphic Panel/Ascension	Late 8 th century	13.2	8.1
9.	Christ in Majesty Panel	Late 9 th century	10.2	9.8
10.	Ascension Panel	Late 9 th century	10.8	30.7
11.	Baptism & Ascension/Entry into Jerusalem	ca. 870-80	13.5	8.5
12.	Life of Christ diptych	Late 9 th century	34	10.7
18.	Fragment of a Spoon	Late 10 th century	5.9	2.6
23.	<i>Majestas Domini</i> with Four Angels	Late 10 th century	15	8.5
27.	<i>Traditio Legis cum Clavis</i>	Late 10 th century	15.8	11.3
28.	Enthroned Virgin and Child	Third quarter, 10 th century	15.4	11
48.	<i>Majestas Domini</i> and Four Evangelists	Early 11 th century	11.7	9.5
56.	Pierced Zoomorphic panel	Mid 11 th century	6.6	18.4

Table I. Extant Anglo-Saxon Carved Elephant Ivories: Date and Size

The three largest ivories (cat. 5, 10, 12, Figs. 2.12, 3.8, 3.9)²³⁹ are comparable in size with the largest late antique consular diptychs or Byzantine panels, which could range between 30–42.8cm in height and 11–16cm in width, like the famous Archangel ivory at the British Museum (Fig. 3.10). The elephant ivories therefore reflect an awareness of the potential of the imported elephant tusk to produce large plaques, as well as the technical capacity to carve such panels from the overall tusk without damaging the panel or the rest of the tusk. Given this, it can be assumed that the abilities required for such processes would have most likely been limited to a few individuals, probably living and working within a royal or ecclesiastical milieu. This context would have supplied not only the means to acquire the tusks and make them available to the craftsmen, but also perhaps the comparable objects or guidance to assist in the creation of the carved panels and demonstrate that such large objects of carved ivory were indeed a possibility.

This set of requirements, along with certain dating periods, might suggest at least two potential provenances for the production of eight of the ivories (cat. 1, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12): the court of Offa of Mercia (reg. 757–96) or the court of Alfred and his successors. As has been well established, Offa's court was in close political touch with the “culturally inspired” court of Charlemagne, and in 792, he visited the papacy in Rome where he could have seen examples of large ivory objects in person. Either through trade or exchange, Offa's court provides a milieu in which the value of ivory would have likely been recognised, and as such, desired as a status symbol of his position as “King of the Mercians” (*rex Merciorium*).²⁴⁰ Equally, ecclesiastical links between Charlemagne's court and centres in Anglo-Saxon England through the aegis of the Church may provide an explanation for the availability of large pieces of elephant ivory in the region during the later eighth and early ninth century. These of course, are not mutually exclusive hypotheses. It is well known that Offa was a regular patron of the Church and ecclesiasts

²³⁹ It must be noted that cat. 7-12 all show evidence of resizing, suggesting they were originally larger. For of ivory in the medieval period, see: Cutler, 1987: 431-76; Eastmond, 2010: 743; Stirling, 2014: 197-201.

²⁴⁰ Although some charters entitled Offa ‘*rex Anglorum*’, his more usual title was ‘*rex Merciorium*’, and there is some debate as to whether the ‘*rex Anglorum*’ charters are tenth-century forgeries, produced at a time when the title ‘*rex Anglorum*’ was commonplace. It has been suggested, therefore that the most secure evidence lies in the coinage, and although some of these carry the legend ‘+OFFA-REX’, it is not universally accepted that this denotes ‘*Offa rex Anglorum*’. See further, Bullough, 1973; Grierson & Blackburn, 1986: 279; Kirby, 1992: 174; Gannon, 2003; Rollason et al., 2010; Sauer & Story, 2011.

like Alcuin moved between the royal courts of Charlemagne and Offa, while also frequenting ecclesiastical centres, such as York, as did the papal legates visiting England at this time.²⁴¹ Certainly, the lack of supply routes bringing elephant ivory out of Africa and Asia during the eighth and ninth century (even under Byzantine rule),²⁴² and the similar sizes and dates suggest that some of these carved elephant ivories may well have been made from what was a large shipment (or two) of elephant ivory to Anglo-Saxon England. While stylistic support for this hypothesis will be considered in the next chapter,²⁴³ the size and conventional dating of the ivories indicate (at this point) that this is not an unreasonable assumption. At the very least it can be suggested that the size and possible dates of these pieces implies evidence for a strong link between the practice of carving sizeable ivories and wealthy patronage from the late seventh century and throughout the eighth in Anglo-Saxon England. While Cuthbert's comb is unlikely to have been associated with a group of ivories entering Anglo-Saxon England through secular Mercian patronage, it was certainly part of a pattern of acquisition, ownership, awareness and spread of elephant ivory among high status individuals, either through economic trade or political and ecclesiastical gift exchange through contacts with western Europe.²⁴⁴

Equally likely, for the late ninth-century ivories produced within the context of royally supported ecclesiastical reform and Continental imitation during the ninth and tenth centuries,²⁴⁵ is the patronage of Alfred (849–99) and his successors Æthelstan (894–939) and Edgar (c.959–75),²⁴⁶ and the reforming churchmen they maintained in office: Dunstan, of Worcester, London and Canterbury (909–88), Æthelwold of Winchester (904/9–84), Oswald, of Worcester and York (d. 992) and Germanus of Winchester (d. 1013).²⁴⁷ Together these men dominated the creative output of late Anglo-Saxon England; their activities highlight not only the potential routes of artistic influence at play in later ninth- and tenth-century Anglo-Saxon England, but also the availability of knowledge and

²⁴¹ See e.g. Bullough, 1973; Rollason et al., 2010; Sauer & Story, 2011.

²⁴² MacGregor, 1985: 42.

²⁴³ See Chapter 4.

²⁴⁴ See further below, Section 3.4.

²⁴⁵ See Chapter 4.

²⁴⁶ For more on Alfred and his successors see: Abels, 1998; Gretsche, 1999; Pollard, 2006; Scragg, 2008.

²⁴⁷ For more see: Ramsey, 1992; Lapidge, 1992: 99-129; Alexander, 1992: 9; Lapidge, 2004: Oxford DNB website; Yorke, 1988; Yorke, 2004: Oxford DNB website; Barrow, 2009: 141-54; Lapidge, 2009.

active interest in the arts. Against this background it is possible to postulate that such activities could well have provided the means by which the ivory for the later carved elephant ivories might have reached Anglo-Saxon England when elephant tusks were still mostly unavailable in western Europe. It is evident that these later pieces also follow the pattern of size templates seen in Table I, although it must be noted that two represent re-carvings on the reverse of two panels carved in the eighth century (cat. 7, 8 and 11, Fig. 3.11A, 3.12a, 3.13A).²⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the practice continued into the tenth and eleventh centuries with the *Traditio Legis* (cat. 27, Fig. 3.14A), Virgin and Child Enthroned (cat. 28, Fig. 3.14B), *Majestas Christi* and Four Evangelists (cat. 48, Fig. 3.15A) and the Pierced Zoomorphic panel (cat. 56, Fig. 3.15B), being carved on sizable panels show an awareness of the high status value placed on ivory, and perhaps indicate a new supply available to create new objects. They certainly indicate that elephant ivory remained an important and sought after medium in later Anglo-Saxon England.

As has become clear from this consideration of the demand of elephant ivory in Anglo-Saxon England in the eighth to eleventh centuries, analysis of the production, distribution and consumption of goods in relation to the ivory trade in the early medieval period, depends on the recognition of international trade relations. Although there is a notable lack of documentary reference to ivory, elephant teeth, tusks, or any other words relating to elephant ivory, it seems that its market value continued to be such that whether supplies were low or plentiful, it would be in demand by individuals of the social elite, secular and ecclesiastical. This being said, there is an obvious need to explore several avenues of evidence in order to trace the elephant ivory trade and the Anglo-Saxon patronage of the medium, given its near invisibility in the textual record. In this respect, the archaeological evidence of continental and Mediterranean imports, the examination of known market values and the known trade routes across the English Channel and North Sea basin (as set out in Hodges' model),²⁴⁹ allows for a comprehensive survey of elephant ivory trade in the Anglo-Saxon period.

To put the absence of documentary (economic) accounts into perspective, there is considerable discussion of the importation of elephant ivory in the period of the Roman Empire. The societies that could transport elephants across water had the means to

²⁴⁸ See further, Chapters 4 & 5.

²⁴⁹ See above, 89.

transport tusks, and these were exactly the means available to the Romans who moved luxury commodities across North Africa, Asia and Europe into Britannia.²⁵⁰ Pliny the Elder, in his *Natural History* of c.77 AD, indicates that by the first century the ivory of both the African and Asian elephant was being imported into the Roman world, and goes on to declare that the tusks of an elephant “command a high price and the ivory is excellent for images of the gods”, adding that “large tusks are seen in temples” and “the most expensive product found on land is ivory”.²⁵¹ Such accounts, however, do not record market prices for ivory, so there is little sense of what its monetary value was in antiquity,²⁵² although during the first-century elephant ivory was stockpiled, both as a status symbol and as a means of storing wealth in regions where elephants were not native; this drove prices up to exorbitant levels.

By the time of Diocletian’s *Edict of Maximum Prices* in 301, which records the actual price of ivory, it was valued considerably lower, at 150 denarii per Roman pound, only 1/40 the value of bullion silver. By comparison, pure silk was 24 times more expensive and the cost of a woollen *chlamys* (cloak) was 100 times more costly.²⁵³ A century later, the Theodosian Code of c.429 suggests a change in value, recording that ivory carvers were exempt from public service.²⁵⁴ While these constitute the few extant indications of ivory prices or regulations relating to ivory craftsmen, a general silence

²⁵⁰ The first written evidence of trade in ivory tusks came from as early as c. 2258-2251 BC in Sudan, but most ancient references seem to originate from around the Red Sea, Sudan and East Africa itself (Shalem, 2004: 18).

²⁵¹ Pliny, *NH*: dentibus ingens pretium et deorum simulacris lautissima ex his materia. invenit luxuria commendationem et aliam expetiti in callo manus saporis, haud alia de causa, credo, quam quia ipsum ebur sibi mandere videtur. magnitudo dentium videtur quidem in templis praecipua, sed tamen in extremis Africae, qua confinis Aethiopiae est, postium vicem in domiciliis praebere saepesque in his et pecorum stabulis pro palis elephantorum dentibus fieri Polybius tradidit auctore Gulusa regulo (bk. VIII, section X); Pliny, *NH*: ex iis, quae spirare convenit, animalibus in terra maximum dentibus elephantorum, in mari testudinum cortici (bk. XXXVII, section LXXVIII).

²⁵² Cutler, 1987: 432. By the mid third century BC, the price of raw ivory was considered to be worth 1/50 of what it had been in the preceding century, a drop in price credited to a glut of African ivory on the market as a result of the policies of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (309–246 BC), when it became common practice to throw away old or unwanted ivory rather than re-carving or reusing it.

²⁵³ Cutler, 1987: 434.

²⁵⁴ Codex Theodosianus, CTh.13.4.0. De excusationibus artificum: Maximum praefectum praetorio. Artifices artium brevi subdito comprehensarum per singulas civitates morantes ab universis muneribus vacare praecipimus, si quidem ediscendis artibus otium sit adcommodandum; quo magis cupiant et ipsi peritiores fieri et suos filios erudire. CTh.13.4.2. (Codex Theodosianus, website). For more see, Clair, 2003: 12.

regarding such issues in the written record is a recognised trend, and after the fifth century, mention of ivory as an economic unit disappears entirely from the record in Anglo-Saxon England and Europe generally.

Despite this, and while other early authors cite various areas from which ivory was actively hunted and shipped either east to Arabia and the Mediterranean world or west from around the Red Sea and India,²⁵⁵ it seems that the majority of ivory tusks came from East Africa until the fifth century.²⁵⁶ Islamic expansion in the eighth century would prove problematic for the spread of ivory from Western Africa through the Mediterranean, pushing trade routes further east through Arabia and Ethiopia. However the Arab conquest did establish an ivory trade monopoly, and this, together with likely overhunting, meant that the amount of ivory available to Europe generally declined significantly during the eighth century, becoming almost completely unavailable, likely driving prices up, before it enjoyed a re-emergence throughout Northern Europe during the twelfth century, although it did begin to appear in Spain in the late tenth century.²⁵⁷ In the light of this, the distribution systems established in the scholarship that demonstrate routes taken across the Channel carrying cargo like glassware, pottery and other materials is useful in attempting to refine the routes by which elephant ivory could have reached Anglo-Saxon England as part of such cargoes after the eighth century.

The two trade networks established in the Parisian basin and central Rhineland, are the most likely candidates for cross-Channel ivory trade in early medieval England from the early sixth century (Fig. 3.16). As noted, the natural harbours and river systems that lined the coast of England had provided ample opportunity for international import and export activity since the Roman occupation, and would continue to develop throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. Indeed the earliest known routes that passed through the Rhineland and the Parisian basin continued (albeit with differing levels of prosperity) into the seventh and eighth centuries when Arab expansion and Frisian maritime control forced consumers and traders to search elsewhere for luxury items, among which could have been ivory (Fig.

²⁵⁵ Shalem, 2004: 20-22; see also Pal, 1981: 72-4. Actively hunted in Libya, Mauritania, Egypt, Syria, Iran, Vidisa, Indus valley, Kashmir, Orissa and Ethiopia.

²⁵⁶ Shalem, 2004: 22; for early written accounts of Indian ivory, see Pal, 1981.

²⁵⁷ Shalem, 2004: 22; Cutler, 1985: 30. Cutler considers *c.*960 to be too late for the return of elephant ivory, but this coincides with the earliest dated ivories of Islamic Spain. For further discussion, see Shalem, 2004.

3.17). This is not to say that the two long-established interlinked networks ceased to function; rather, they were used intermittently throughout the entire medieval period but the amount and types of goods that were funnelled through them would decline due to geopolitical tensions.²⁵⁸

The eventual disappearance of ivory rings from the archaeological record in the region in the late seventh century is directly related to the reduced amount of supplies arriving from the Continent by those routes, further supporting the evidence of their decline. While there is no concentration of rings in any one region in England (Fig. 3.5B), it has been suggested that the most likely route by which they were shipped across Europe was through the Rhine and on a westerly route to East Anglia, rather than through Kent.²⁵⁹ This suggests that elephant ivory may well have been brought to Anglo-Saxon England through both commercial and personal transport, along trade routes established long before the earliest dated ivory ring, supporting a *longue durée* explanation of ivory trade to England, despite the considerable impact of the Roman departure on the small network of routes and harbours that remained in the early sixth century between England and the Rhineland.²⁶⁰

As indicated, the dispersal of goods from the major continental rivers connected to the English Channel never diminished; rather, the flow of merchandise changed and became more varied as the commercial sources of Africa and Asia were impeded. It follows from this that the later Anglo-Saxon examples of carved elephant ivory demonstrate that the material was still treasured and in demand after the trade routes had been disrupted, and that access was gained through exchange and gift-giving rather than extensive commercial trade. A rise in the exploitation of whalebone, which reached a peak between c.650 and 850, would become not only an important source for creating utilitarian objects such as chopping blocks, knife handles and boat oars, but also as a replacement for elephant ivory in carving valuable objects for wealthy ecclesiastical and secular patrons.

²⁵⁸ Regardless of such considerations, and although considerable strides have been made in discerning west African and trans-Saharan trade routes, the main body of evidence still supports East Africa, the Mediterranean and the countries surrounding the Red Sea as the main distribution points for elephant ivory before it was transported into central and western Europe and eventually Britain and Ireland. Met Museum, Website: “Trans-Saharan Gold Trade (7th-14th centuries)”; Masonen, 1995.

²⁵⁹ Hills, 2001: 140.

²⁶⁰ See further, du Plat Taylor & Cleere, 1978.

3.2b Whalebone ‘Ivory’ in Anglo-Saxon England

While whalebone cannot technically be defined as ivory, evidence for its use survives to such a degree that it cannot be ignored as a related medium for artistic and utilitarian creations in Anglo-Saxon England; it will thus be considered here as a sub-category of ivory-like material (Table II). Indeed, the sheer amount of extant archaeological evidence for the worked material dated to *c.*650-850 suggests that it may well have ranked in importance over elephant ivory, and at least served as its replacement, before being phased out with the increased availability of walrus ivory in the early tenth century.

Catalogue Number	Name of Ivory	Date	Height (cm)	Width (cm)
2.	Franks Casket	<i>c.</i> 700	10.5	23 (D:18.5)
3.	Larling panel fragment	Eighth century	4.8	7.2
4.	Blythburgh tablet	Eighth century	9.5	6.5
6.	Gandersheim Casket	Late 8 th century	12.6	12.6 (D: 6.8)
20.	Whalebone chess pieces	Late 10 th century	5.9	2.6

Table II: Extant Anglo-Saxon Carved Whalebone

There is no evidence for active whaling in Anglo-Saxon England,²⁶¹ and the concept of opportunistic access when discussing the Anglo-Saxon use of whalebone is one that has produced much discussion in the last twenty years as archaeological site reports are published with increasing frequency and the material itself is either re-analysed or more thoroughly considered at the time of excavation.²⁶² Since Gardiner’s preliminary work, therefore, there are now twenty-seven sites identified in Britain and Ireland (Fig. 3.18)²⁶³ that show evidence of whalebone remains, as fragments and waste material, and as carved

²⁶¹ See below, 114.

²⁶² Evison, 1987; Gardiner, 1997; Boyle, 1998; West, 1998; Mulville, 2002; Cramp, 2005-2006; Cohen, 2008-2011; Szabo, 2008; Lucy, 2009; Scull, 2009; Neuman de Vegvar, 2014.

²⁶³ The evidence of whalebone found in Scotland and Ireland has been included in this map, to support the recording of whaling mentioned by the Annals of Ulster and Bede. See further, Mulville, 2002.

objects, bringing the total number of extant whalebone objects from the Anglo-Saxon period to over 1,500 pieces.²⁶⁴ Notably, most of the fragments date to *c.* 650-900, suggesting a period of heightened exploitation activity (alongside the growth in antler and bone working), possibly due to the lack of large quantities of elephant ivory available, supported by the four extant carved pieces dated to before *c.* 900. At the end of this period, the introduction of walrus ivory may indicate the reason for the swift reduction in surviving whalebone evidence in the tenth and eleventh centuries.²⁶⁵

Nevertheless, scholarly interest in carved whalebone artefacts dating to the Anglo-Saxon period has focused primarily on only four extant carvings all dated to the eighth century: namely, the Franks Casket (cat. 2, Fig. 2.2); the Gandersheim Casket (cat. 6, Fig. 2.13); the Larling panel fragment (cat. 3, Fig. 3.19); and the Blythburgh tablet (cat. 4, Fig. 3.20), understandably ignoring the archaeological fragmentary remains and waste material, but also neglecting to note worked objects such as the whalebone chess pieces (cat. 20).

The Franks Casket (Fig. 2.2) is the most well-known extant Anglo-Saxon carved ivory-like object, and has been enthusiastically studied and published since coming on the market in 1857.²⁶⁶ The stylistic and iconographic scheme is complex and has promoted much debate,²⁶⁷ but of importance to this discussion is its material and size compared with the other whalebone and even elephant and walrus ivories considered in this study. The Gandersheim Casket (Fig. 2.13), although much smaller than the Franks Casket bears a resemblance to the precious metalwork ‘house-shaped’ reliquary caskets that were popular in Britain and Ireland (as well as Merovingian and Carolingian Gaul) between the seventh and ninth centuries.²⁶⁸ Here it is important to note that it represents a highly elaborate object carved out of whalebone and, along with the Franks Casket, points to the value invested in the material at a time when little or no ivory (either elephant or walrus) was available.

The survival of two such objects, with the possibility that more may once have existed, highlights the desire for the medium of ivory within Anglo-Saxon high status

²⁶⁴ See Appendix I. While the map denotes only twenty-seven, several places like Hamwic, Ipswich and others had several dig locations within the larger site. See Appendix I for more comprehensive listings and archaeological site records.

²⁶⁵ Riddler, 2014; see also Gardner 1997.

²⁶⁶ See further, bibliography in Webster 2012b.

²⁶⁷ See Chapters 4 & 5.

²⁶⁸ Webster & Backhouse, 1991: 177-8, cat. 138; Webster, 2000: 63.

milieux, and the technical abilities and adaptability of the carvers to produce carvings that catered to enthusiasm for the material. This supposition is supported by the Larling panel fragment (Fig. 3.19), found in 1970 near a church dedicated to Æthelberht of East Anglia (d. 794) and dated to the late eighth century, which although broken along its long axis, presents carved decoration reminiscent of that preserved on the Franks and Gandersheim caskets in terms of its technical accomplishment and complexity of detail, and is thought to represent part of a casket or larger plaque. Unlike these pieces however, the Blythburgh tablet (Fig. 3.20), or *tabella*, is not as elaborately decorated but still represents an example of (ivory) tablets carved and filled with wax for epistolary use or note-taking throughout the Middle Ages.²⁶⁹ Being only 9.3cm high and 6.4cm wide, despite being made of the potentially more sizable substance of whalebone, the tablet is smaller than earlier Roman and even most medieval (ivory) examples that are generally of larger dimensions.²⁷⁰ Although it is less elaborately decorated than the caskets and Larling plaque, its function and find site, within the grounds of a former priory, as well as the three styli found with it,²⁷¹ highlights once again the desire for the material of ‘ivory’ in high status contexts in early medieval England, and here, like the Larling plaque, in clearly ecclesiastical contexts.

Alongside these carved pieces and the archaeological fragmentary remains and waste material, several examples of whalebone gaming pieces, a whalebone ring, and other object types that were formerly produced in elephant ivory, metal or wood, as well as new implements, began to appear in the ninth century manufactured from whalebone.²⁷² This is significant and suggests the purposeful use of, and even possibly preference for whalebone, as both an artistic and utilitarian medium by which any number of objects and tools could be made.

Despite the extraordinary diversity of objects and the impressive amount of whalebone surviving from Anglo-Saxon England there is, as noted, no evidence that whaling was actively pursued in the region, and rather than obtaining the material through

²⁶⁹ See further, Brown, 1994.

²⁷⁰ For example: the c. 500-700 wooden Coptic (Byzantine made) tablets at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (accession number 14.2.4a-d) are 23.7 x 14.9 cm. For more information on the importance of these wax-writing tablets see the web references for Brown (1994) and Priest-Dorman (1991).

²⁷¹ Waller, 1902: 40; Webster & Backhouse, 1991: 81.

²⁷² See further, Szabo, 2008, Riddler, 2014.

trade and commerce, as was the case with elephant ivory, whalebone was scavenged and secured by chance before being distributed inland. Although this is subject to considerable debate,²⁷³ the evidence points to exploitive, opportunistic access by coastal communities (as opposed to organized hunting), a practice that continued until the eleventh century when royalty claimed whales and other cetaceans.²⁷⁴ This suggests that the social value of whales had exceeded their nutritional and utilitarian worth in outlying communities in England, thus leading to disputes about their possession. It would seem that of the countries with access to the Channel and North Sea,²⁷⁵ only the Anglo-Saxons did not practice whaling during the early medieval period; it was widespread on the Continent from at least the ninth century between Normandy and Flanders, extended to the Bay of Biscay, with frequent mention being made in charters, saints' lives, and other sources.²⁷⁶ Interestingly, there are two accounts in the *Annals* of whaling off the coast of Ireland by 'foreigners' who may have been Scandinavians,²⁷⁷ but the earliest reference to the use of cetaceans as well as other sea mammals in the region is found in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* of 731, where he describes Ireland (the land of the Scots) as a place where "seals (*uituli marini*) as well as dolphins (*delphines*) and even whales (*balenae*)" were frequently captured.²⁷⁸ This might suggest that the Anglo-Saxons did indeed hunt whales but Bede is clearly describing the rich (and distinct) island of Ireland rather than England, while the terms he uses for the different sea creatures allegedly hunted off the coasts of Ireland are clearly subject to interpretation: *vituli marini* being literally, sea calves; there is also the question of how much of Bede's description here is dependent on Pliny's *Natural History* or Isidore's *De Natura Rerum*.²⁷⁹ With the lack of physical evidence it cannot be

²⁷³ Szabo, 2008 and Riddler, 2014 suggest that due to the amount of artefacts at Flixborough, there may have been an active whaling community there.

²⁷⁴ For a full examination of the development of royal claims on whales (and other cetacean) that washed ashore in England see, Gardiner, 1997. By contrast, the practice of royal claim to whales was established in France in the ninth century. Gardiner, 1997: 173, 176.

²⁷⁵ For further information on whaling along the Channel coast of England and the North Atlantic Sea see, Proulx, 1986; Riddler, 1990: 260-2; Gardiner, 1997: 173-95; Lindquist, 1995: 17-54; 1997.

²⁷⁶ Gardiner, 1997: 175. For further information on whaling along the Channel coast of France and Spain, see Fischer, 1881: 5-291; Markham, 1881: 969-76; Jenkins, 1921; Thomazi, 1947; Lestocquoy, 1948; Musset, 1964; Jenkins, 1971; Fraser, 1977: 1-44.

²⁷⁷ Mulville, 2002: 36.

²⁷⁸ Bede, *HE* I. 1: Capiuntur autem saepissime et uituli marini, et delphines, nec non et balenae (Colgrave & Mynors, 1969: 46); see also Mulville, 2002: 36.

²⁷⁹ For more see Kendall & Wallis, 2010.

concluded from this account that the Anglo-Saxons participated in whale hunting as an organised activity.

While the apparent lack of whaling among the Anglo-Saxons suggests opportunism was the common method of accessing whalebone, this situation is far from clear given the dearth of written evidence for the beaching or stranding of whales. There are sporadic comments, of which that preserved on the Franks Casket is perhaps the most notable, but most postdate the twelfth century.²⁸⁰ As Vicki Szabo aptly puts it, whales are “the invisible resource” of Anglo-Saxon England consisting of thousands of pounds of meat and only a few bones to testify to their use.²⁸¹ The fragmentary remains and waste material found on sites across England, both in coastal areas and well into the interior, suggest however that once acquired the whale was considered a commercial object, providing both food and material to be traded or sold inland.²⁸² The distribution of the remains does indicate a heavy exploitation of whales around the Channel, but this does not reveal whether the artefacts found were the product of trade with those having opportunistic access or interaction with continental hunting parties.²⁸³ This latter practice is recorded in the early eleventh-century laws of Æthelred (968–1016) who ordered a duty to be paid by merchants from Rouen who were importing *craspesius* (“fat fish”) into London,²⁸⁴ suggesting that this was not necessarily the first such venture, but one already established as a viable commercial practice.

Given the general absence of information about the whale population around Anglo-Saxon England, it is difficult to gauge just what would have been available to scavenging coastal communities. Exploiting stranded, beached or wounded whales was certainly possible, and the Franks Casket suggests it did occur, but the question of numbers and availability highlights just how much information is missing. Furthermore, the stranding, or beaching of whales is in itself a difficult study as the specific reasons

²⁸⁰ Gardiner, 1997: 182-6; Mulville, 2002: 36. The frequency of stranding recorded in the extant medieval accounts do not provide reliable estimates for the Anglo-Saxon period as some species strand more than others, and records of mass stranding skew the data, as they are more often reported, leaving out the singular strandings and those that occurred in low population coastal areas that may have gone unreported.

²⁸¹ Szabo, 2008: 6.

²⁸² Lucy, 2009: 200.

²⁸³ Round, 1899: 34; Robertson, 1925: 72-3; Gardiner, 1997: 175.

²⁸⁴ Gardiner, 1997: 175. The Latin *craspesius* being the contraction of *crassus piscis* or ‘fat fish’, was used as one of the words used to describe cetaceans in the early medieval period.

behind the phenomenon have yet to be understood,²⁸⁵ and engaging as such studies can be, they do not take full account of the archaeological evidence or extant carved whalebone pieces,²⁸⁶ which provide contextualisation more directly related to the whale and its role as a commodity in Anglo-Saxon England.

In this respect, Gardiner's assessment of whalebone as an inferior substitute for ivory may carry conviction in light of the growing trend in bone carving and clear lack of widespread availability of elephant ivory by the eighth century, but Neuman de Vegvar has argued convincingly for a more impartial two-tiered system of access to and use of whalebone products: one, as meat and bone provided by smaller cetaceans, being used by local communities as salvageable products of convenience; and two, as the larger bones and skeletal material of the rarer (and bigger) deep sea whales being stranded and given, traded or sold to high status ecclesiastical or secular individuals.²⁸⁷ This model is one that allows for whalebone to be considered a commodity in both the coastal and interior areas and is supported by the archaeological record. It remains the case that, as far as the use of whalebone is concerned in Anglo-Saxon England, there is a clear chronological rise and fall of each type of ivory used by the local craftsmen, and after c.850 whalebone is seen infrequently, being noticeably on the decline with the newer source of walrus ivory being imported in great volume from the newly discovered lands surrounding the Arctic and Russia from the late ninth century onwards.

²⁸⁵ While several scholars have suggested that sonar and pollution are to blame, this does not explain instances of medieval beaching. There are several suggestions as to the sources of medieval stranding, namely changes in food supply, coastline configuration and hunting, all of which could disrupt migratory patterns, creating something of a pattern of strandings at certain sites along the Channel. More recently Neuman de Vegvar has suggested that sunspot activity, and its interference with the earth's magnetic field (and therefore a whale's ability to follow their usual migration patterns) may have been relevant to whale strandings within the Anglo-Saxon period. Astronomical observations in China during the medieval period have been well documented, alongside radio-carbon tree ring data (which rises and falls with sunspot activity), and together these allow for some understanding of the possible frequency of whale stranding in the Anglo-Saxon period. According to this information, Neuman de Vegvar argues that if sunspot activity did affect whales to the degree of stranding themselves during migration, then records would indicate that whalebone would have been episodically available *only* in the mid to late eighth century. Neuman de Vegvar, 2014: 323-336.

²⁸⁶ See further below, Section 3.3.

²⁸⁷ Neuman de Vegvar, 2014: 323-336.

3.3c Walrus Ivory in Anglo-Saxon England

As the demand for ivory and ivory-like materials continued throughout the period, it is no wonder that, once discovered, the material from a new tusked mammal, the walrus, would become so popular within artistic circles. A circumpolar species, the walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus*) lives almost exclusively off the coasts of Greenland, Norway, Russia, North America and Alaska, and during the early medieval period, also populated the waters around Iceland.²⁸⁸ The tusks are recorded as having been actively sought as early as c.890 in Norway, but by 1000, it was being used throughout Scandinavia and Western Europe and would continue to supply workshops with ivory for nearly three centuries. The wider archaeological evidence from Anglo-Saxon England, however, indicates that the popularity of elephant ivory and whalebone was not superseded by walrus ivory before the eleventh century. While enjoying considerable popularity across Europe and Scandinavia, walrus tusk ivory is rare in the archaeological record from England and Ireland (Fig. 3.21), and most finds cluster near the walrus' habitats surrounding the North Sea. Unlike elephant and whalebone ivory, both of which are found often within the archaeological record, walrus ivory is so rare in Anglo-Saxon England that it occurs in only eleven (known) instances in the archaeological record before the mid eleventh century (Table III).²⁸⁹

Cat. No.	Name of Ivory	Date	Find spot
21.	Alcester Tau-Cross	Late tenth century	Rectory garden at Alcester, Warwickshire.
24.	Resurrection with Mary & St Peter	Late tenth century	North Elmham, Norfolk.
25.	<i>Agnus Dei</i> Tau-Cross	Late tenth century	Water Lane, London.
26.	Two Angels	Late tenth or early eleventh century	In a garden near St. Cross, Winchester.
38.	Crucifixion	Late tenth or early eleventh century	Tombland, outside Norwich Cathedral Close.
39.	Crucifixion	Late tenth or early eleventh century	Near Lewes Priory, East Sussex.

²⁸⁸ Roesdahl, 2005: 184.

²⁸⁹ These pieces are known to have been excavated from find spots around England; the remaining Anglo-Saxon walrus ivories could very well have been found archaeologically but that information has been lost. See below, Fig. 3.36, Table IV.

46.	Crucifixion	Late tenth or early eleventh century	“Archaeological contexts”, no other evidence.
51.	Seal-die of Godwin & Godgytha	c.1040-50	In a garden on the west side of the market place at Wallingford, Berkshire.
52.	Seal-die of Wulfric	No later than c.1060	In a box in a garden shed in Sittingbourne, Kent.
55.	Virgin & Child Crosier fragment	Mid-eleventh century	“Found” in Kensington or Chelsea.
57.	Zoomorphic Pen Case	Mid-eleventh century	“Found” in London.

Table III: Excavated Carved Walrus Ivories

While there are other important references to the use and exchange of walrus ivory during the twelfth century,²⁹⁰ the notable lack of evidence for the material before this is curious: it could be considered in keeping with its general availability in the late- ninth to early-tenth century, leaving little opportunity for its use (and discarding) in Anglo-Saxon England before the Norman Conquest. However, walrus ivories make up over half the extant Anglo-Saxon ivory objects, suggesting a high demand for and prolific use of the material. This, along with the absence of any waste material from butchering the animals, suggests that a large shipment (or shipments) of walrus tusks supplied the craftsmen in Anglo-Saxon England.²⁹¹ If this was the case, questions of where the tusks came from, in what form, and ultimately, where the Anglo-Saxon walrus ivories were carved become significant.

In direct contrast to the situation in Anglo-Saxon England, excavations along the coasts of Norway, Scandinavia and Russia reveal the common presence of walrus ivory dating to the early to mid ninth century. Overall however, it seems that the bulk of the material was sent to Scandinavia, Britain and Ireland, and Western Europe in the later tenth century through the activities of the Greenland Norse;²⁹² much of our evidence for these activities derives from excavations in Greenland, Scandinavia, Novgorod (Russia) and a few high-status sites in western Europe. Of these, the excavation of Norse sites in Greenland provide clear evidence for the regular working of walrus tusk but not much

²⁹⁰ See further, Roesdahl, 2000; 2005.

²⁹¹ I must thank Dr Else Roesdahl for her personal communications concerning this discussion of archaeological discoveries of walrus ivory.

²⁹² Roesdahl, 2005: 185.

carved ivory, with indications that their tusks were carefully (for the most part) removed with the principal objective of being shipped to market.²⁹³ No complete tusks were found but maxillary chips from walrus teeth,²⁹⁴ and a small number of preserved walrus ivory objects dating from about 1000 show that the settlement of Greenland (and its later decline) coincided with demand for this material.²⁹⁵ Beyond Greenland, Hedeby and Ribe in Jutland, Lund in Skåne, the Novgorod Republic (Russia), eleventh-century deposits in Sigtuna, Cologne in western Germany, and York, Winchester and Dublin in England and Ireland have also provided evidence of walrus ivory.²⁹⁶ The range of products as well as a number of un-worked maxillary teeth, skulls and tusks across the sites demonstrates the marked increase in the use of walrus ivory in the early eleventh century.

The artefacts found in Northern Europe and Russia also display a pattern of supply and demand to the wealthy, a trend repeated in Britain and Ireland where stylistic and the archaeological evidence found in Table III above shows that the ivory was acquired, albeit more rarely, and carved on site in high status contexts, namely: Winchester, North Elmham, Alcester, Norwich, Wallingford and York. Here, they have emerged from contexts that date them to a eighty-five year period, between 975 and 1060. Overall, the combined ecclesiastic and secular subject matter of these walrus ivory objects clearly points to the material being used by both high-status Church and secular elites. The remaining twenty-four carved ivories made from walrus tusk surviving from Anglo-Saxon England lack archaeological contexts, and have no associations before their earliest recorded appearance in the nineteenth century.²⁹⁷ Yet, despite their relatively small size (compared with the carved elephant ivories) the elaborate carving of these pieces highlights the versatility of the medium, while also reflecting the taste and artistic demands of the patrons responsible for the production of such luxury items, setting them alongside other high-quality and expensive materials, and so demonstrating the status of walrus ivory and its perceived value in the late Anglo-Saxon period, at a time of heightened artistic and cultural activity.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*: 187.

²⁹⁴ Keller, 2008: 6.

²⁹⁵ Roesdahl, 2000: 146.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*: 147; There are also later twelfth- and thirteenth-century layers at Trondheim and Roskilde. See also Smirnova, 2001: 14.

²⁹⁷ For more, see catalogue in vol. II.

The acknowledged scholarly stance on the relative size of walrus tusks states that they are on average 3-4cm in diameter at the base of the tusk (Fig. 3.3A).²⁹⁸ If the diameter is 3-4cm on average, with the acknowledgement that some will of course be bigger (and smaller), the oval shape of walrus tusks then limits this ‘average’ to something less as there is only so much flat surface to carve on before either hitting the curve of the tusk, or the pulp in the centre of the tusk (Fig. 3.22). Arguably, unless the ivory is carved ‘in the round’, like that seen on the Lawrence pyx (cat. 50, Fig. 3.23), a lot of material is lost if one were trying to make a flat panel like so many of the walrus ivories of this study are. Admittedly, there is no record of how Anglo-Saxon craftsmen planned or executed the carving of these ivories, so it is very possible that they were somehow able to flatten a slight curve (possibly by soaking them?) in order to gain more carvable ground for the finished product. That being said, as will be shown below, this would not account for the average width (let alone depth or diameter) of the carved walrus ivory objects in this study.

In building the catalogue for this volume, it has come to light that the ‘3-4cm average diameter’ size is somewhat lacking when looking at the measurements of the ivory panels included here (Table IV). Taking only the objects whose total measurements are known (i.e height, width and when appropriate, depth), the width of each piece (i.e. the measurement that would be cut across the diameter or flat dentin of the tusk, rather than the length [or height] of the tusk) added together (highlighted in bold: 169.67) and divided by the total number of ivories (30) creates a ‘new’ average size of 5.65cm.²⁹⁹

Cat. No.	Name of Ivory	Size (in cm)
16	Nativity	H8 W6.5
19	Three-Beasts Comb	H5.4 W4.1
21	Alcester Tau-Cross	H5.15 W14.3
22	Heribert Tau-Cross	H5.5 W14.5
24	Resurrection with Mary & St Peter	H10 W6.5
25	<i>Agnus Dei</i> Tau-Cross	H4.7 W13.6

²⁹⁸ See above, Chapter 3, section 3.3 & 3.3c; see also Hills, 2001: 134. All figures appear at the end of the appendix, not in the Comparative Figures or Catalogue later in this volume.

²⁹⁹ This average only includes 30 of the 35 walrus ivory pieces in this study, as the full measurements of 5 objects were unknown at the time of submission.

26	Two Angels	H7.5 <i>W5</i>
29	Quatrefoil Virgin & Child Enthroned	H9.52 <i>W5.72</i>
31	Pectoral	H14.9 <i>W6.3 (Depth 3.5)</i>
32	Seated Figure in Majesty	H9.5 <i>W5.8 (orig. 7)</i>
33	Virgin & Child Enthroned	H9.9 <i>W6.5 (orig. 7)</i>
34	Crucifix Reliquary	H12.2 W10.9 with arms (<i>body>3.7</i>)
36	Crucifixion	H9 <i>W5.5 (Depth 1.8)</i>
37	Crucifixion	H7.9 <i>W5.9</i>
38	Crucifixion	H10.5 <i>W6</i>
39	Crucifixion	H6.1 <i>W3.9</i>
40	Crucifixion	H6 <i>W4.1</i> (Depth 0.8-0.9)
41	Crucifixion	H6.7 <i>W5.6</i>
42	Crucifixion	H8 <i>W5.5</i>
43	Crucifixion	H7.7 <i>W5.5</i>
44	Crucifixion	H6.3 <i>W3.6</i>
45	Crucifixion	H8.8 <i>W5.5</i>
46	Crucifixion	H9.6 <i>W5.7</i>
47	Four symbols of the Evangelists	4.2x4.2; 4.2x4.2; 4.1x3.9; 4x3.8 ³⁰⁰
49	Walrus ivory disk	<i>W3.8</i>
50	Lawrence Pyx	H6.6 <i>W5.9</i> (depth of interior 3.7)
51	Seal-die of Godwin & Godgytha	H8.5 <i>W4.4</i>
52	Seal-die of Wulfric	H5.4 <i>W4.4</i>
53	Pendant Reliquary Cross	H11.9 <i>W4.7</i> (Depth 2.5)
54	Beverley Crosier	H9.8 <i>W6.4 (Depth 2.5)</i>

Table IV: Anglo-Saxon Walrus Ivory Sizes

This brings about a number of questions, but it could suggest two main theories. First, the physical dimensions of the walrus living in the medieval period could have been larger, therefore growing substantial tusks (as tusk size is seemingly a genetic trait, much like that of elephants), and consequently, the big ‘tuskers’ were then killed off for their ivory, and

³⁰⁰ Two of these pieces are severely damaged, these measurements are based off their original shapes. See cat. 47 for more.

after so many generations of over-hunting, the genes to produce larger tusks are no longer in circulation. Secondly, the purposeful use of fossilised walrus ivory tusks and baculum found in Greenland, Iceland, Scandinavia and Russia could very well have been found and sent to market under the same pretexts as contemporary medieval tusks (Fig. 3.3C, 3.24). Fossilised ivory (of any type) when carved can produce similar colourings as ‘fresh’ ivory (Fig. 3.3B), although this is not always the case and can show moderate to severe staining depending on the context in which it was fossilised; the possibility of fossilised ivory being used for the deeply stained ivories of this study (cats. 19, 25, 38, 46, 57) could add another dimension to the provenance of each, however it is just as likely that the archaeological contexts in which cat. 25, 38 and 57 were found could have stained them.

Additionally, the deep carving seen on several of the ivories is in direct contrast to the standard practice of describing walrus ivory as being ‘appropriate’ for only the small, finer carvings that were created in medieval Europe from c.900; while there are of course such delicate objects, and those which have been expertly carved to hide the imperfections of the inner pulp (see the Lewis chessmen at the British Museum for example, Fig. 3.25), several walrus ivories of this study bring to light the error of this interpretation. The Alcester Tau-Cross (cat. 21), the *Agnus Dei* Tau-Cross (cat. 25), the Pectoral (cat. 31), Crucifixion (cat. 36), Lawrence Pyx (cat. 50), Seal-die of Godwin & Godgytha (cat. 51), Pendant Reliquary cross (cat. 53), Beverley Crosier (cat. 54), and the Zoomorphic Pen case (cat. 57),³⁰¹ are all carved either in three-dimensions (i.e. ‘in the round’) or have a thickness that would undoubtedly have caused problems for the carver in showing the pulp found in the centre of the tusk. This pulp, much like the nerve canal of the elephant tusk, can range in its ‘depth’ or length down a walrus tusk, however if taking ivory from further down the tusk, this drastically reduces the height and width available for making these larger ivories (Fig. 3.26). The skill involved in carving the ivory in such a way that no pulp is seen is something that would have been only available through high-status ecclesiastical or royal artistic contexts, and while such physical detriments can be worked around, as they most clearly have in these (and other) ivories of the period, it still remains the fact

³⁰¹ This piece is not shown in the table due to measurements being unavailable, however it is carved (besides the lid) out of one solid piece of ivory, much like the Lawrence Pyx (cat. 50), and therefore is included here.

that these ivories are *too big* for what has been previously followed as academic canon as to the size and shape of walrus ivory tusks available for carving.

Clearly more must be done in studying the size and shape of these ivories, as well as those extant walrus objects found on the Continent, however it is unlikely that any museum will willingly give up any of their objects for the purpose of (the extremely invasive) carbon-14 dating tests. With this in mind however, in the presence of the extant panels, it would seem that the perception of the material as a suitable medium for artistic purposes was keen enough to produce not only an extensive (and technically advanced) collection of carved ivory objects, but warranted the purposeful hunting for big tusks or even larger fossilised ivory to bring to market.

While these considerations point to their perceived value, the lack of archaeological context and absence of documentary accounts, does limit our understanding of these ivories. Furthermore, like the whalebone, there is no evidence of active walrus hunting by the Anglo-Saxons during this period; rather commerce and diplomatic gift-giving seem to have been the two key avenues by which the material reached the region.³⁰² Medieval records indicate that the west coast of Greenland was colonised around the year 1000, at which point the importation of walrus ivory into the European luxury trade from the Disco Bay area reached significant levels.³⁰³ This would have had to have been a very organized activity; it is clear that most of the preparatory work on tusks was executed before it reached England,³⁰⁴ and the distances traversed were vast. Greenland lies about 1400km from Iceland, its nearest eastern neighbour, for instance. Not surprisingly, Roesdahl has suggested that the ivory must have passed through a great number of hands before reaching customers in Britain and Ireland (Fig. 3.27).³⁰⁵ So organised was the trade that it has been suggested that the colonization of Greenland marks the endeavour to establish an export economy based on walrus ivory. This not only implies that it attracted sufficiently high market prices to make it a viable venture, but also points to the existence of frequent and continuous contact between the Norse settlers and markets in Scandinavia

³⁰² See further below, Section 3.4.

³⁰³ Keller, 2008: 3, 4. Until the discovery of Greenland, the only source of walrus ivory was in the arctic north of Norway and Iceland, settled in the late ninth century; these two sites proved problematic due to overpopulation, political disputes with the Sámi, and overhunting.

³⁰⁴ Hinton, 1990: 29; Trynoski, 2008: 4.

³⁰⁵ Roesdahl, 2005: 187.

and western Europe, including Anglo-Saxon England, with interest in the goods provided by the Greenland Norse remaining buoyant from the turn of the eleventh century into the thirteenth, when elephant ivory again became more available. Whatever the reasons underpinning the establishment of the Greenland enterprise, the distribution of walrus ivory from this centre reflects a functioning trade network that included the Insular world in the tenth and eleventh centuries, with the existence of a thriving carving community (for both artistic and utilitarian objects), that encompassed wide geographical areas but also catered to a specific level of demand for the material.³⁰⁶

3.3d Summary

Consideration of the three types of ivory available to early medieval craftsmen in Anglo-Saxon England provides a glimpse into the use and perception of ivory in the region. Elephant ivory, while popular on the Continent throughout the middle ages, has been previously assumed as a rare commodity in Anglo-Saxon England after the departure of the Romans in the late fifth century. Despite this assumption, elephant ivory continued to be available in the region its widespread presence in graves and settlements pointing to its circulation in a way that both refutes the claim of discontinued trade and supports the idea of a persistent desire for this luxury medium despite (or perhaps because of) the lack of supplies.

Whalebone remains the most enigmatic of the three types of ivory, only revealing its true spread and popularity in Britain and Ireland through the large amount of artefacts found on archaeological sites. The extant carved examples reveal a high status context alongside the more ‘mundane’ chopping boards, knife handles, oar blades and fragmented waste. The most telling aspect of the whalebone material is the date range, which focuses on *c.* 650-850, thus lying directly between the points of decline in elephant ivory during the eighth century and the rise in popularity and availability of walrus ivory in the early tenth century. While this has been noted elsewhere,³⁰⁷ it is worth emphasising that not only did

³⁰⁶ Sawyer, 1984: 44, 45; Roesdahl, 2000: 145; 2005: 185; Keller, 2008: 3, 5, 21. Why the Norse colonized Greenland at this time (and subsequently left) has generated much debate, but it seems likely that the motive lay in economic or political considerations. The settlement provides a clear example of a group following the market and moving from the only source of walrus ivory in the arctic north of Norway to Greenland where large numbers of walrus had been discovered.

³⁰⁷ Gardiner, 1997: 181; see more Riddler, 2014.

whalebone act as a pragmatic replacement for elephant ivory, its use in ecclesiastical and high status secular contexts implies a change in attitude towards its perceived value, which increased exploitation of the material – an activity that only declined when a new material, walrus, became more widely available. This suggests in turn that fashions in the types of ivory rose and fell in keeping with supply and demand.

Walrus ivory began to emerge as a luxury material in the beginning of the tenth century, filling the void that was left by the decline of elephant ivory trade across Europe generally. Imported from northern regions, walrus tusks provided the workshops in Anglo-Saxon England with ivory for the production of a few small and delicate pieces of work. There is very little archaeological evidence for the material but sites in Scandinavia and northern Europe indicate the extraordinarily wide-spread nature of the trade in this ivory. The replacement of elephant and whalebone ivory by walrus was most likely one of pragmatism that may well have incorporated (or capitalised on) the exotic reputation of walruses. They certainly seem to have enjoyed a reputation for value at the same level as the elephant.

3.4 Articulating the Value of Ivory in Anglo-Saxon England

There is no shortage of artefacts dated to the Anglo-Saxon period that display the demand for all things luxurious and exotic by the social elite and all of these objects serve to highlight the skills of Anglo-Saxon craftsmen and the importance of display to their patrons in both secular and ecclesiastical milieux.³⁰⁸ The ivories are a prime example of this, but if they are to be understood as deluxe items, as a valued medium purposefully chosen and having a place amongst all the artistic media available to craftsmen and patrons, it is necessary to have some understanding of attitudes towards such phenomena in Anglo-Saxon England despite the prevailing lack of information about their provenance. They can, nevertheless, be supplemented by the way in which the carved examples reflect a sense of the material value of ivory, by the indications of associated status revealed by the archaeological record, and the perceptions of luxury expressed in literary contexts. Furthermore, records of ivory being used as tribute and gift-exchange highlight how prized this medium was for exhibiting rank and position.

³⁰⁸ See e.g., Bruce-Mitford & Ashbee, 1975-1983; Biddle, 1990; Leahy, 2009.

Furthermore, the concepts of *exotica*, long-established in the literature of late antiquity and early Christianity invested ivory with a heightened sense of value, perhaps encouraging merchants and traders to push the boundaries of the known world to supply the international market with the material. The legendary status of the animals providing the ivory was as much a factor of its popularity as the economic cost of tusks and carved pieces; all served to inculcate a sense of the rare and exotic, as well as the luxurious. Here, enquiry into this subject will pursue two avenues: namely, the persistent articulation of the value of ivory as a luxury item, and accounts of the animals themselves; in each case, the literary accounts will be considered, in conjunction with the extant carved and archaeological evidence. Together, these will emphasise the development and persistence of perceptions of ivory as a luxury item before and during the Anglo-Saxon period.

3.4a Ivory. Luxury and the Articulation of Value

While numerous scholarly publications have established that ivory has been valued as exotic, luxurious and accommodating to the most rigorous of artistic ambitions for centuries, for the people of Britain and Ireland before the Roman occupation it would be easy to demonstrate a certain lack of knowledge of the medium as none of the creatures providing the ivory were native to its shores. As the concepts of value and luxury surrounding the medium of ivory were not indigenous, it therefore begs the question of why and how the post-Roman Anglo-Saxon peoples learned to covet the material as they did. Here it will be argued that the esteem surrounding ivory derived directly from Rome and the Continent, mainly through written literary references and high-status ownership, in such a profound way that it would influence the future of the medium in the region throughout the early medieval period, and beyond.

Much of the dissemination of knowledge and popular artistic or cultural trends in the early medieval period occurred through textual and oral traditions and/or by exhibition and display: through the (scant) written record, the oral relation of legend, and the ostentatious spectacle of objects and wealth. But how does an object, or medium, become a popular indicator of status within society? In the case of ivory in Anglo-Saxon England, the argument must be made for earlier antique attitudes encouraging the continued presence of the medium in a land where trade would be significantly disrupted with the departure of the Romans and the material itself could not be locally sourced. These textual

sources provide a wide array of information demonstrating that ivory was perceived to be an artistic medium and analogical representation of beauty and wealth.

In Homer's *Illiad* and *Odyssey*, for instance, it is treated in terms of its colour, hue, value and surface quality in highly metaphorical passages.³⁰⁹ Thus in the *Illiad*, an arrow wound in Menelaus' thigh inspires comparison between the colour of his flesh with that of blood in terms of "a woman dyeing ivory blood red,"³¹⁰ the killing of a charioteer includes mention of "reins white with ivory" slipping from his hands.³¹¹ In the *Odyssey*, ivory is compared with bronze, gold, amber and silver as part of an array of colours with both intrinsic value and surface lustre. Here it is not so much the colour of the ivory that is important, but rather its ability to reflect light with its polished surface.³¹² Penelope's beauty is also presented as being "whiter than carved ivory," suggesting the ideal of female beauty was to surpass in whiteness the colour of ivory.³¹³ Further attributes are invoked elsewhere,³¹⁴ but in each instance, ivory is compared alongside other precious and bright substances, highlighting not only the pervasive nature of ivory in early Mediterranean cultures, but also its value as a commodity for the wealthy alongside the precious metals that were the norm from an early date. The attitudes revealed in Homer's poetry, were widely repeated by a number of antique writers: Herodotus in the fifth-century BC;³¹⁵ Pausanias, a traveller and commentator on the Hellenistic world in the second century BC, who was fascinated by *chryselephantine* statues, which were reserved for statues of deities in temples;³¹⁶ and Pliny the Elder in the first century AD in his *Natural History* as "the most expensive produce found on land".³¹⁷ Together, these classical and late antique accounts demonstrate the manner in which ivory was valued, and they provide the foundations on which early medieval and specifically Anglo-Saxon

³⁰⁹ Connor, 1998: 48.

³¹⁰ The passage suggests practices involving dyed ivory at a very early date. *Illiad* IV, 160 (Fagles, 1991: 150); Connor, 1998: 48.

³¹¹ The passage suggests the practice of ivory appliquéés being pierced and sewn into the leather: *Illiad* V, 670 (Fagles, 1991: 183); Connor, 1998: 49

³¹² This reference occurs when Telemachus describes Menelaus's palace: *Odyssey* IV, 79-84 (Fagles, 1996: 126); Connor, 1998: 49

³¹³ *Odyssey* XVIII, 223 (Fagles, 1996: 382); Connor, 1998: 49

³¹⁴ For the wide variety of ivory objects mentioned, Connor, 1998: 50.

³¹⁵ Scullard, 1974: 260; Szabo, 2008: 26.

³¹⁶ Statues created from of a composite of gold and ivory. Frazer, 1898; Jones & Wycherley, 1971-79; Connor, 1998: 50-54.

³¹⁷ Eichholz, 1962: 331; Shalem, 2004: 20. See more above, n. 275.

accounts were constructed, both directly by access to the literature itself,³¹⁸ and indirectly through biblical and exegetical texts sharing the same literary motifs.

Many biblical references to ivory thus repeat the luxurious connotations of ivory, its associations with beauty, and the varied uses to which it was put. The Old Testament describes kingly thrones (*thronum de ebore* and *solium eburneum*),³¹⁹ and luxurious residences (*domus eburneae* and *domibus eburneis*),³²⁰ as well as everyday objects such as curtain rings (*eburneis circulis*), beds (*lectis eburneis*) and serving benches (*transtra*) made of *ebore indica*,³²¹ the term also used (as it is in the literature of late antiquity), in the Song of Solomon and Lamentations to speak of the beauty of the male and female form.³²² The only reference to ivory in the New Testament is found in Revelation 18:12 where vessels of ivory (*vasa eboris*) are mentioned in the context of other rich and precious goods.³²³ These accounts provided the basis of those that subsequently circulated throughout early medieval England, and provide a useful illustration of the ways in which ivory came to be almost universally regarded as a material of great value.

In contrast to the highly metaphorical tone of these passages, however, the tendency to describe the medium of ivory (or art in any form in detail) was not considered necessary by most early Church Fathers, such as Ambrose (c.340–97), Jerome (c.347–420) or Cassiodorus (c.485–c.585), and although the literary motif of ivory as a luxury object was long-established this is not picked up in the exegesis. Reference to art and imagery by

³¹⁸ See discussion below, Section 3.4 and Appendix III.

³¹⁹ I Kings 10.18; II Chronicles 9.17. *Biblia Sacra Vulgata* is used throughout; English translations supplied by *Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition*.

³²⁰ I Kings 22.39; Psalm 44.9; Amos 3.15.

³²¹ Esther 1.6; Amos 6.4; Ezekiel 27.6.

³²² Song of Solomon 5.14 *manus illius tornatiles aureae plenae hyacinthis ventereius eburneus* (His hands are turned and as of gold, full of hyacinths. His belly as of ivory, set with sapphires); Song of Solomon 7.4 *collum tuum sicut turris eburnea oculi tui sicut piscinae in Esebon quae sunt in porta filiae multitudinis nasus tuus sicut turris Libani quae respicit contra Damascum* (Thy neck as a tower of ivory. Thy eyes like the fishpools in Hesebon, which are in the gate of the daughter of the multitude. Thy nose is as the tower of Libanus, that looketh toward Damascus.); Lamentations 4.7 *ZAI candidiores nazarei eius nive nitidiores lacte rubicundiores ebore antiquo sapphyro pulchriores* (Zain. Her Nazarites were whiter than snow, purer than milk, more ruddy than the old ivory, fairer than the sapphire.)

³²³ Revelation 18.12 *mercem auri et argenti et lapidis pretiosi et margaritis et byssi et purpurae et serici et cocci et omne lignum thycinum et omnia vasa eboris et omnia vasa de lapide pretioso et aeramento et ferro et marmore* (Merchandise of gold and silver, and precious stones; and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thy wood, and all manner of vessels of ivory, and all manner of vessels of precious stone, and of brass, and of iron, and of marble).

Augustine of Hippo (354–430),³²⁴ and Gregory I (540–604)³²⁵ thus provide two exceptions to the general dearth of artistic commentary in such contexts, but even their discussions do not reference ivory.

Despite this lack-lustre approach by early ecclesiastics, the literary tradition of ivory as a standard of beauty and luxury did continue well into the early medieval period. By the early seventh century, the tendency to regard ivory as a benchmark for preciousness is found in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* (615-630), whose work was widely known in Anglo-Saxon England, and who drew on material in classical, late antique and Christian sources.³²⁶ While he merely describes an elephant (according to the Greeks) in Book 12 (*De Animalibus*),³²⁷ in Book 16 (*De lapidibus et metallis*), he presents three different types of stone (*Arabicus*, *Chemites* and *Coralliticus*) as being “similar to ivory” in appearance and “whiteness”,³²⁸ and invokes it as a comparison in Book 10 (*De vocabulis*) where he uses Vergil's concept of ‘good looks’ as being connected to fair skin and ivory.³²⁹ Conversely, his entry on ivory itself simply describes it as “ivory (*ebur*) [...] named after the *barrus*, that is, the elephant”, before citing Horace's *Epodes* 12.1 as evidence for use of the term *barrus*.³³⁰

³²⁴ Augustine, *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus* on John VI.1-14 (Willems, 1954). Here Augustine contrasts the literate with the illiterate: where both individuals can see the letters and forms similarly, the illiterate man can only see and praise the work, while only the literate man can recognize, praise and understand the symbols. See also, Thacker, 2005.

³²⁵ A better-known interpretation of the usefulness of images is that made by Pope Gregory in his letters to Serenus, Bishop of Marseilles in 599 and 600 (published source); see further, Meyveart, 1964; 1979; 63-77; Chazelle, 1990: 138-53.

³²⁶ See further below, Section 3.4.

³²⁷ Isidore, *Etymologiae* XII. De Animalibus, ii. De Bestiis, 14. *Elephantum Graeci a magnitudine corporis vocatum putant, quod formam montis praeferat; Graece enim mons λόφος dicitur.* (The Greeks believe that the elephant (*elephans*) is named for the size of its body, which looks like a mountain, for in Greek a mountain is called λόφος.); Barney et al., 2006: 252.

³²⁸ Isidore, *Etymologiae* XVI. De lapidibus et metallis, iv. De lapidus insignioribus: 11. *Arabicus similis est eboris sine ulla macula.* (Arabicus is similar to ivory without any marks); 24. *Chemites ebori similis* (Chemites is similar to ivory). XVI, v. De Marmoribus, 9. *Coralliticus in Asia repertus, mensurae non ultra cubita bina, candore proximor eboris et quadam similitudine.* (Coralliticus is found in Asia, measuring not more than two cubits, close to ivory in its whiteness and a certain similar appearance.); Barney et al., 2006: 320-21.

³²⁹ Isidore, *Etymologiae* X.P.203 cites the *Aeneid*, 1.592 *Quale manus addunt ebori decus* (the kind of beauty that craftsmen give to ivory); Barney et al., 2006: 225.

³³⁰ Isidore, *Etymologiae* XVI. v. 19 invokes Horace's *Epode 12.1* “Quid tibi vis, mulier nigris dignissima barris?” which has been translated as “Woman most deserving of black elephants (*barrus*) what do you mean?” and interpreted as Horace's suggestion that the woman is more suitable for servicing black elephants than pleasuring him. Barney et al., 2006: 322.

From such references, ivory was clearly identified in literary contexts as an exotic material of great, indeed idealized, beauty and value, rather than simply the product of an elephant's tusk. This is not to suggest that all of these accounts were known intimately throughout Anglo-Saxon England, but there is a growing body of evidence that antique and early medieval texts written on the Continent were circulating in the region.³³¹ The work of Helmut Gneuss and Michael Lapidge, for instance,³³² and numerous studies on early Anglo-Saxon libraries and book collections,³³³ provide useful insights into the number, scope and spread of the classical, late antique, biblical and exegetical texts that would have been available in Anglo-Saxon libraries before 1100, and have demonstrated, significantly, that the oldest manuscripts (those dated to the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries) are all cited as being of a Northern (Northumbrian) provenance, while those of the ninth to eleventh centuries all emerge from southern centres, namely those in Canterbury, Salisbury or Winchester, highlighting the shift of artistic activities and political power to the south of England from the time of Alfred the Great, in line with the production of Anglo-Saxon ivories as evidenced by stylistic and iconographic conventions.³³⁴ Of the classical or late antique authors, Pliny is the most heavily represented with four copies (one of which is incomplete) of his *Naturalis Historia* having English provenance,³³⁵ while there is no evidence for Homeric texts, or those by Pausanias or Herodotus, it is clear that many Anglo-Saxon authors relied on and requested Latin authors, poets and prose writers in support of their own work, accessing it from the work of scholars like Isidore of Seville.³³⁶

According to Gneuss, the number of surviving biblical texts (either whole or in part) are sporadic but plentiful, and of the passages mentioning ivory referenced above from the Old Testament, only Kings, Ezechiel and Song of Solomon are listed and range in date from the seventh to eleventh centuries, with a majority falling into the later period:

³³¹ For more see: Bressie, 1939: 102-25; Brown, 1975: 237-293; Dumville, 1981: 153-178; Gneuss, 1984: 643-688; Lapidge, 1985: 33-89; 2006.

³³² See e.g.: Gneuss, 2001; Lapidge & Gneuss, 1985a.

³³³ Gneuss, 1984: II, 643-88.

³³⁴ See below, Chapters 4 & 5.

³³⁵ Ibid.: II, 69, 75, 76, 128.

³³⁶ Brown, 1975: 274-5. There is also the possibility that the authors were 'discovered' on the Continent when Anglo-Saxon missionaries or ecclesiasts visited there.

there are two copies of Kings, two of Ezechiel and five of the Song of Solomon.³³⁷ On the other hand, while complete copies of the Bible were not common, those which have survived provide a similar picture (albeit on a larger scale) to that presented by the Old Testament chapters: a heavy emphasis on the early seventh and eighth centuries (seven manuscripts) and the eleventh century (seven manuscripts), with only small numbers representing the intervening period.³³⁸

As a collection of classical, biblical and exegetical information, it is, of course, Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* that survives, perhaps not unsurprisingly, in the largest numbers in Anglo-Saxon libraries: twenty copies (both complete and incomplete) with connections to Anglo-Saxon England survive from the ninth century, with four copies that are earlier in date.³³⁹ In addition to Isidore's preservation of the *Aeneid* in his Book 10: *De Vocabulis*, five copies of Vergil's text survive, ranging in date from the ninth to eleventh centuries.³⁴⁰

Influenced by such sources, the references to elephant ivory in Anglo-Saxon literature, only four in total, all involve the concept of gift-giving between high-ranking royal and ecclesiastical elite. The earliest dates from the eighth century, and is provided by Bede who explains that Æthelburga of Northumbria (consort of Edwin, reg. 616–33), was implored by Boniface V to “kindle the spark of the true religion” in her pagan husband, and given gifts which included an ivory comb adorned with gold.³⁴¹ Slightly later in the eighth century, two riddles composed by Alcuin of York in c.794 describe in prose and verse a large comb of elephant ivory; both are addressed to Archbishop Riculf of Mainz (c.787-813), who had sent him a large ivory comb.³⁴² The fourth reference to ivory is that which records Æthelstan's donation to St Cuthbert of a “cross skilfully finished with gold

³³⁷ For full manuscript information and location from Gneuss 1984, please see Appendix III. Gneuss, 1984: 55, 59 (Kings); 27, 55 (Ezechiel); 47, 59, 73, 80, 141 (Song of Songs).

³³⁸ Ibid.: 39, 52, 53, 59, 73, 86, 125 (seventh and eighth centuries); 49, 55, 57, 59, 85, 101, 143 (eleventh century).

³³⁹ Ibid.: 61, 89, 124, 136.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.: 27, 82, 86, 102, 140.

³⁴¹ Bede, *HE* II.11: Praeterea benedictionem protectoris uestri beati Petri apostolorum principis uobis direximus, id est speculum argenteum, et pectinem eboreum inauratum; quod petimus, ut eo benignitatis animo gloria uestra suscipiat, quo a nobis noscitur destinatum. (“We have, moreover, sent you the blessing of your protector, the blessed Peter, the chief of the Apostles, to wit, a silver looking-glass, and a gilded ivory comb, which we pray your Highness to accept with all the goodwill with which it is sent by us.”) Colgrave & Mynors, 1969: 46.

³⁴² Sorrell, 1996: 311.

and ivory” on his way to invade Scotland c. 934.³⁴³ Of these references, only the final example makes no mention of continental associations in the act of gift-giving, while the only mention of ivory that coincides with extant carvings is that of Alcuin, who received his ivory comb while at Charlemagne’s court.

Uniquely, Alcuin’s comb riddles are the only reference to ivory in that particular literary genre by an Anglo-Saxon author, and while another well known ‘ivory’ riddle is found carved on the front panel of the Franks Casket,³⁴⁴ Alcuin’s riddles are important in that they not only show an awareness of the genre, including the vernacular traditions of his homeland, but also give a sense that owners of ivory during this period were aware of the original animal source material of their objects. The two riddles, composed in response to the gift received Riculf of Mainz, involve ‘false’ and ‘true’ solutions in a manner found elsewhere in the Latin Symphosius Riddles (60, 64 and 80), dated to the second century,³⁴⁵ and the late tenth-century Exeter book collection of Old English poetry.³⁴⁶ Unfortunately Alcuin’s comb does not survive but it has been associated with other *deluxe* combs of the period, like that given to Æthelburga,³⁴⁷ the rectangular (but undecorated) elephant ivory comb deposited with the body of St Cuthbert in 687 or 698 (cat. 1, Fig. 3.7B) and the later Three-Beasts comb (cat. 19; Fig. 3.28).³⁴⁸ While Alcuin’s comb-riddles take a more light-hearted approach to ivory, it is still clear from his language that the focus is not on the ivory but rather the animal traits inherent in its previous incarnation.

One Anglo-Saxon author who referenced ivory in an economic context (rather than art object or gift) was Ælfric of Eynsham whose *Colloquy* of the late tenth century acted as a teaching tool for grammar in the vernacular set side-by-side with Latin. Laid out in such a manner that the largest, and most varied, amount of vocabulary was utilized, it forms a dialogue between the author and different professions in the early medieval period, one of whom is a Merchant. Ælfric questions the variety of his goods,³⁴⁹ and in reply the Merchant explains his wares saying that he sells “purple and silk, precious gems and gold, various garments and paints, wine and oil, *ivory* and bronze, sulphur and tin, the glass art

³⁴³ Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England, website. See also, Dodwell, 1982: 108.

³⁴⁴ See below, 138.

³⁴⁵ Symphosius Riddle 60, 64, 80 (Leary, 2015); For more see Sorrell, 1996: 314.

³⁴⁶ Exeter Book, Exeter Cathedral Library: MS 3501. Sorrell, 1996: 314.

³⁴⁷ See above, 129.

³⁴⁸ Sorrell, 1996: 313.

³⁴⁹ Ælfric’s *Colloquy* “Quales res adducis nobis?”; Garmonsway, 1939: 33-4.

and such like (*italics added*)”.³⁵⁰ While this singular reference does not articulate the status of ivory as an artistic medium, it does highlight the products sold by merchants during Ælfric’s time and the economic context in which it was viewed. The influence of Ælfric’s *Colloquy* was significant, with copies of the texts found in seventeen manuscripts, all dating to the eleventh century.³⁵¹

It is clear that ecclesiastical commentary in early medieval England was more focused on biblical text and exegesis, rather than art and media. Nevertheless, considered together with the source material available in the libraries in high-status contexts in Anglo-Saxon England, it is likely that ivory as a valued artistic medium was persistently underpinned by literature traditions. Taking this into consideration, the lack of written work on ivory in Anglo-Saxon England (compared with authors from classical or late antique milieu), is in keeping with the general trend in educated circles across Europe. This means that the extant carved and un-carved evidence must speak for the un-recorded opinions of craftsmen and patrons of ivory in early medieval England.

3.4b Ivory. Legend and Encounter

With the late antique and continental texts promoting the concept of value and luxury connected to ivory, the material evidence demonstrates that Anglo-Saxons embraced the media in all forms, utilizing it in secular and ecclesiastical environments as a representation of wealth and status. While the literary sources suggest why the ivory came to be viewed in this way in Anglo-Saxon England, it is notable that there is also interest in the animal sources that provided the ivory, as suggested by the Alcuin riddles. Here the persistence of ivory as a luxury medium throughout the Anglo-Saxon period will thus be examined from the point of view of legendary accounts relating to the animals, and potential encounters with them; these serve to emphasise the persistence of attitudes to the material, further explaining the desire among artists and patrons for ivory in Anglo-Saxon England despite threats to supply lines.

Before turning to the legendary perceptions that were the elephant, whale and walrus in the early medieval period, it is worth noting the cultural perceptions of animals

³⁵⁰ Ælfric’s *Colloquy* “Purpuram et sericum, pretiosas gemmas et aurum, uarias uestes et pigmenta, unium et oleum, ebur et auricalum, es et stagnum sulfur et uitrum et his similia”; Garmonsway, 1939: 33-4.

³⁵¹ For full list, see Appendix III.

in Anglo-Saxon England generally, as these cannot be separated from the physical value and utility of the beasts; to do so would be to misinterpret early medieval attitudes and the contexts within which the accounts must have circulated. In early medieval society there was no such thing as a 'generic' animal;³⁵² this is a view supported by the artistic and literary evidence as the animals variously portrayed in these sources not only supplied sustenance and manual labour, but also acted as complex symbols and principles, and in some cases as scapegoats for, or reflections of, human frailty and sin.³⁵³ The concepts of exotica, myth and legend would assist in keeping ivory at the forefront of the medieval imagination where its symbolic value was deep seated, and God's hand was deemed omnipresent in the natural world. For early societies, natural forces were phenomena to be survived, rather than controlled, but without many options in times of harsh weather or famine, animals would have been seen as resources and providers of labour, as well as symbolising spiritual or ideological values.³⁵⁴ Against this background, therefore, perceptions of the elephant, whale and walrus, particularly in Anglo-Saxon England, were dependent on several key factors: classical and late antique oral and literary traditions, including the Bible; their nature as animals; their physiology; and their relationship with humanity.³⁵⁵

The elephant has been a popular feature in text and image since classical antiquity, and the early medieval authors and manuscript artists found inspiration in them as evidenced by the extant accounts.³⁵⁶ Furthermore, early ecclesiastical commentaries by Origen (186-253), Ambrose (340-97), Basil (329-79) and Eustathius (c.450) had much to say on the elephant,³⁵⁷ in terms of God's hand in designing its physical form and the moral implications of its characteristics. These ideas formed the bases of the accounts preserved in the *Liber Physiologus*,³⁵⁸ the precursor to the medieval bestiary, which was translated

³⁵² See, for example, Cohen, 1994: 60; Szabo, 2005: 2.

³⁵³ For the extensive literature on this subject, see e.g., Willis, 1974: 9; Cohen, 1994: 76; Wapnish, 1995: 233; Szabo, 2005: 2; Bintley & Williams, 2015.

³⁵⁴ Szabo, 2008: 20, 23, and essays in Bintley & Williams, 2015.

³⁵⁵ Szabo, 2005: 2. As literary references to the elephant and whale are prolific particularly when compared with those relating to the walrus, the following discussion presents an overview.

³⁵⁶ See, e.g. Druce, 1919: 4.

³⁵⁷ For further discussion see Druce, 1919: 5-6; Scullard, 1974.

³⁵⁸ Cook, 1919: 1. It is unlikely that the original version included many details later introduced by Isidore.

into Old English and Old Norse, and disseminated widely throughout the early medieval world.

The elephant did not have a literal presence in Anglo-Saxon England,³⁵⁹ indeed Ælfric, often cited for his part in the development of the perception of ivory (elephants and whales), declared of the elephant that “to some men this [the elephant’s appearance] will seem strange to hear, because elephants never came into England.”³⁶⁰ There is, nevertheless, a growing body of evidence that the Anglo-Saxons were much more aware of the creature and its literary traditions, than previously credited.³⁶¹ The gift of a “great white elephant”, Abul Abbas, by the Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid to Charlemagne in the first years of the ninth century indicates that, at the very least the creature was known of in prominent circles of Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical and secular elites.³⁶² But beyond the political and ecclesiastic traffic between Anglo-Saxon England and the Carolingian court, the literary work on elephants by Pliny (who wrote thirteen chapters on the subject), Orosius, Ambrose and Basil were well known in the region,³⁶³ and it was the accounts of these writers that informed the Physiologus accounts of the elephant that circulated in Anglo-Saxon England; Ælfric’s commentary on the elephant (and other exotic creatures) made good use copying previous work to share the ideas and implications of elephants with those in early medieval England.³⁶⁴

Basing much of his work off of the likes of Pliny, Ambrose and Isidore of Seville, Ælfric’s textual representation of the elephant is typical in that his aim seems to be one of education, demonstrating to his readers that although they themselves might not have seen an elephant (or any of the other exotica described in his text), they should

learn that the world’s variety is not limited by their own experience, and that because they may not have personally encountered a certain creature, they should not therefore disbelieve in its existence... With elephants in particular, it is clear that Ælfric wished to present his hearers with information that would demonstrate

³⁵⁹ The first live elephant in England was that given to Henry III in 1255 by Louis IX of France.

³⁶⁰ Ælfric *Maccabees*: Sumum menn wile þincan syllic þis to gehyrenne, forþan þe ylþas ne comon næfre on Engla lande. Skeat (1966), II, pp 66–121, at 102–104 (ll. 554–578); Christie, 2013: 150.

³⁶¹ Cross, 1965; Thornbury, 2008; Christie, 2013.

³⁶² Christie, 2013: 465.

³⁶³ Ibid., 466.

³⁶⁴ For more in depth discussion see Cross, 1965; Thornbury, 2008; Christie, 2013.

that this outlandish animal was real, not a literary fantasy, and that he felt that knowing this was vital to the correct understanding of a text.³⁶⁵

At the same time, much of his commentary was both ‘factual’ and moral, catering to a dual audience of those reading for spiritual meaning, and others simply fascinated by the power that saints had over such exotic creatures; adding these beasts to a variety of his texts, these animals, it seems, were thought by Ælfric to be an intrinsic part of contemporary education, making a push for explaining the ‘facts’ about elephants,³⁶⁶ showing concern that such passages be believed because they came from books, rather than any hearsay or oral legend that tended to bring about outlandish beliefs about such creatures.

Like the elephant, the whale was featured commonly in the literature and inspired strong responses from the time of classical antiquity (and undoubtedly before): namely a mixture of awe, curiosity, fascination, horror and fear, and it was featured commonly in the literature. The words denoting the whale varied widely: the Greeks used *ketos* indiscriminately for all sea monsters or huge fish,³⁶⁷ but the geographer Strabo of Amasya (64 BC-24 AD) drew attention to the behaviour and economic value of the whale, making distinctions between types,³⁶⁸ while Aristotle articulated the difference between *kete* and *phallaina*,³⁶⁹ leading to the Latin equivalents of *cetus* and *balæna*, with Roman authors such as Pliny naming different types of whales such as *physeter* and *orca*.³⁷⁰ The many accounts of whales in antique literary sources describe battles with whales; whales being killed by Roman emperors (Claudius and Justinian),³⁷¹ reports of whalebone architecture

³⁶⁵ Thornbury, 2008: 151.

³⁶⁶ There is a lengthy description of the elephant in his *Maccabees* (see Skeat (1966), II, pp 66–121, at 102–104 [ll. 554–578]), but Ælfric’s comment “Nis na eall fugolcynn on Engla ðeode, ne on nanum earde ne byð naht eaðe eall fugolcynn, forðanðe hi feala syndon, mycele on wæstme and mislice fleoð, swa swa us bec secgað swutollice be ðam” (‘All the varieties of bird do not live among the English nation, nor indeed could all varieties of bird easily live in any one nation, because they are numerous, prolific in offspring, and fly in various different ways, as books clearly inform us about them’ Crawford (1921), p 53 (ll. 260–4).), is telling in that it explains Ælfric’s stance on the power of books and education: if it can be found in his and other texts, it must be true, and therefore be learned from.

³⁶⁷ For the term *ketos*, see: Boardman, 1986, 1997; Papadopoulos & Ruscillo, 2002: 19-201, 206, 216.

³⁶⁸ Szabo, 2008: 35; Jones, 1966: III.2.7; Robson, 1978: 395, VIII, 29.13-30.

³⁶⁹ Papadopoulos & Ruscillo, 2002: 210.

³⁷⁰ Eichholz, 1962; Toynbee, 1973: 208; Szabo, 2008: 34, 39.

³⁷¹ Pliny, *NH* bk. IX.v.14-15: *orca et in portu Ostiensi visa est oppugnata a Claudio principe...praetendi iussit Caesar plagas multiples inter ora portus profectusque ipse cum praetorianis cohortibus populo Romano spectaculum praebuit, lanceas congerente milite e navigiis*

transported to Rome as a spectacle;³⁷² while Juvenal, in his *Sixteen Satires*, mentions briefly a *ballæna brittanica*, which must have been known to Roman residents of Britain and seen from the coast.³⁷³ To classical authors the whale was a force of nature to be battled with, a mighty monster to gain victory over, not just a fish to be caught.³⁷⁴ The adventurous (but cautious) spirit of these authors was not perpetuated in early Christian contexts, where the primary perception was of a monstrous beast that would lure god-fearing men to their deaths, and even worse, to the mouth of Hell. The biblical stories of whales and sea monsters resonated throughout the early middle ages, with their view of the sea: an alien world of danger, death and the Devil.³⁷⁵ With the Bible opening with an account of the creation of living things in the waters and the sea monsters,³⁷⁶ and moving on to the Leviathan of Job,³⁷⁷ the whale of Jonah,³⁷⁸ and the sea monster of Revelations 13.1,³⁷⁹ this attitude is not hard to explain;³⁸⁰ it came to permeate the literature of early

adsultantibus, quorum unum mergi vidimus reflatu belvae oppletum unda; Dewing, 1940: xxix.9-16; Szabo, 2008: 39.

³⁷² Pliny, *NH* bk. IX.xi: longitudine pedum XL, altitudine costarum Indicos elephantos excedente, spinae crassitudine sesquipedali; described by Pliny as a monster, “over forty feet long, the height of the ribs was greater than that of Indian elephants”, this reference suggests knowledge of tusks imported from that region and implies that the Roman authors were aware of the sources of ivory. Szabo, 2008: 42.

³⁷³ Juvenal, *The Sixteen Satires (Satire X)*, Green, 1998. The “British whale” cited suggests that not only were the Romano-British familiar with this animal, but also Juvenal’s Roman audience.

³⁷⁴ For more see Dewing, 1940: xxix.9-16; Szabo, 2008: 39, 42.

³⁷⁵ Szabo, 2008: 44.

³⁷⁶ Genesis 1.21: creavitque Deus cete grandia et omnem animam viventem atque motabilem quam produxerant aquae in species suas et omne volatile secundum genus suum et vidit Deus quod esset bonum. (“And God created the great whales, and every living and moving creature, which the waters brought forth, according to their kinds, and every winged fowl according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.”)

³⁷⁷ Job 40.20: an extrahere poteris Leviathan hamo et fune ligabis linguam eius. (“Canst thou draw out the leviathan with a hook, or canst thou tie his tongue with a cord?”); for a full description of Leviathan, see Job 40-41.

³⁷⁸ Jonah 2.1-3: et praeparavit Dominus piscem grandem ut degluttiret Ionam et erat Iona in ventre piscis tribus diebus et tribus noctibus. et oravit Iona ad Dominum Deum suum de utero piscis. et dixit clamavi de tribulatione mea ad Dominum et exaudivit me de ventre inferni clamavi et exaudivisti vocem meam. (“Now the Lord prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonas: and Jonas was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. And Jonas prayed to the Lord his God out of the belly of the fish. And he said: I cried out of my affliction to the Lord, and he heard me: I cried out of the belly of hell, and thou hast heard my voice.”)

³⁷⁹ Revelations 13:1: ed vidi de mare bestiam ascendentem habentem capita septem et cornua decem et super cornua eius decem diademata et super capita eius nomina blasphemiae. (“And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy.”)

³⁸⁰ Gneuss, 1984.

medieval Europe, including that of Anglo-Saxon England. Thus the whale in the Old English *Physiologus* is described as a “dread preyer on mankind”³⁸¹ with the characteristics of an island, luring sailors to moor their vessels and light fires ‘on shore’ before plunging them to their deaths on its back, as was the way “of demons, the wont of devils.”³⁸²

Interestingly, Northern authors, whose lands lay in the Channel and North Sea were more definitive and descriptive in their accounts of whales, while their Mediterranean counterparts, perhaps more mystified by the animals, offer little in the way of actual description. This said, the varied vocabulary used by Anglo-Saxon authors make it sometimes difficult to differentiate between references to walrus or whale. While there was specific lexicon for the animals in both Latin and Old English, it was used interchangeably. There is the generally unspecific Latin *crassus piscis* (fat fish) and its contraction *crasperius*; or the more specific Latin *cetus* or *balaena* and *hwaæl* in Old English.³⁸³ Such imprecision may suggest limited personal experience with whales by the author or translator; this would support the suggestion that primary access to the creatures in Anglo-Saxon England was opportunistic, meaning most encounters were with the dead and butchered creature.

Of the (mystified) early medieval continental accounts, that articulated by Isidore of Seville is notable. In Book 12 of his *Etymologies* he declares,

Whales are immense beasts, with bodies equal to mountains. They have their name from emitting water, for the Greek *ballein* means emit; they raise waves higher than those of any other sea beast. They are called monsters (*cete*) because of their horribleness.³⁸⁴

³⁸¹ “frē cne and fer[h]ðgrim, fareðlā cendum, niþpa gehwylcum; þā m is noma cened, fyr[ge]nstrē ama geflotan, Fastitocalon”, Cook, 1919: 1.

³⁸² “Swā bið scinn[en]a þē aw, dē ofla wī se”, Cook, 1919: 5. See Ambrose (c.340-97), *Hexameron* IV.32: “What whales are found there, of huge bulk and measureless size! If they were to float on the surface of the sea, you would imagine that they were islands or extremely high mountains whose peaks reach to the sky...but these elemental mysteries are not likely to be faced without experiencing mortal terror!” Cook, 1921:187; Squires, 1988: see further, Szabo, 2005; 2008.

³⁸³ Gardiner, 1997: 174. There is also the distinction between porpoises and dolphins (Old English *mereswyn* < Latin *marswin* < *porcus maris*, sea pig).

³⁸⁴ Isidore, *Etymologies* XII, 6.7: *Ballenae autem sunt immensae magnitudinis bestiae, ab emittendo et fundendo aquas vocatae; ceteris enim bestiis maris altius iaciunt undas; βάλλειν enim Graece emittere dicitur.* Barney et al., 2006: 247-70.

His basis for such statements is made clear in his reference to Jonah's experience in the whale reminding his readers that "the whale that swallowed Jonah was of such size that its belly resembled hell; as Jonah says (Jonah 2:2), 'He heard me from the belly of hell'."³⁸⁵ In keeping with such attitudes are the Old English *Physiologus*,³⁸⁶ *Beowulf*, which describes the hero swimming the *hron-rade* with his blade for protection against the *hron-fixas*,³⁸⁷ and a tenth-century legend by the French monk Letaldus, which tells of an Englishman named Within, who after being swallowed by a whale, kills the beast and drifts to shore (at Rochester) while still inside its body and when the locals came to butcher the beached whale, they deemed it possessed and exorcised it before Within could be freed to explain himself.³⁸⁸

These traditions are in marked contrast with the more peaceful attitudes expressed in contemporary Irish (hagiographic) literature. One of these, Adomnán's eighth-century *Life of Columba*,³⁸⁹ recounts that Columba, asked for his blessing by two of his monks, warns them both to avoid the open waters off the western coast of Scotland, telling them that "last night, at midnight, a great whale rose from the depth of the sea, and it will coast this day on the surface of the ocean between the Iouan and Ethican islands [Iona and Tyree]". One monk does not heed the warning (and only narrowly escapes disaster), but the other, Bathéne, responds with the observation that "The beast and I are both in God's power".³⁹⁰ Columba and Bathéne are subsequently protected by their piety when the whale rises out of the water, as predicted by Columba, with Bathéne blessing it before it disappears peacefully.³⁹¹ This tale marks a distinct departure from the long-established perception that the whale only lured sinful men, or "those who deserve it", and while the first half of the story follows this tradition its ending is markedly different. It is repeated in a nearly identical account of the *Voyage of St Brendan*, the earliest extant version of which

³⁸⁵ Isidore, *Etymologies* XII, 6.8: Cete dicta τ κτος κα τ κήτη, hoc est ob inmanitatem. Sunt enim ingentia genera beluarum et aequalia montium corpora; qualis cetus excepit Ionam, cuius alvus tantae magnitudinis fuit ut instar obtineret inferni, dicente Propheta (2, 3): 'Exaudivit me de ventre inferni.', Barney et al., 2006: 247-70.

³⁸⁶ Cook, 1919: 1 "fareðlā cendum, niþpa gehwylcum"; "Swā bið scinn[en]a þē aw dē ofla wī se".

³⁸⁷ *Beowulf* II.540-41, Heaney, 2002: 204. The common OE kenning for the sea was *hron-rade* (whale road); the *hron-fixas*, whale beasts. See further Szabo, 2008: 27.

³⁸⁸ Pennisi, 1997; Ziolkowski, 1984; Szabo, 2008: 53.

³⁸⁹ Sharpe, 1995: I.19.

³⁹⁰ Sharpe, 1995: I.19.

³⁹¹ Szabo, 2008: 51.

dates to c.900, which recounts the sea voyage taken by Brendan and his fellow monks between the islands in the Irish Sea. When a whale rises out of the sea, Brendan blesses it, names it Jasconius and the whale docilely swims away.³⁹²

Although not as expressive of such equanimity, later Anglo-Saxon texts express a certain objectivity: namely, the late ninth century Old English version of Ottar's voyage to Alfred's court, and the tenth-century *Colloquy* by Ælfric. While Ottar's account will be discussed more fully below,³⁹³ it is worth noting here that while Ælfric was an Anglo-Saxon and Ottar was from beyond the North Sea (Tromsø),³⁹⁴ they both entertain the same attitudes towards the whale (and walrus) – as economic entities. Ælfric questions the Fisherman in his *Colloquy*, who seems a more timid fellow than the bragging Merchant,³⁹⁵ and while being forthcoming about the creatures he catches in the river and the sea, he becomes serious when questioned about whales, declaring that

Teacher: Would you like to catch a whale?

Fisherman: No, I don't think so.

Teacher: Why not?

Fisherman: Because catching whales is a dangerous business. I find it is far better to go to the river with my spear than to go to the sea with many ships to hunt whales.

Teacher: Why is that?

Fisherman Because it is better for me to catch fish than to kill a more powerful one, as it could drown and kill with one blow, not only me but my friends as well.

Teacher: But many men catch whales and escape danger, as well as obtaining a large price for their catch.

Fisherman: You speak the truth but I would not dare sail on account of my fears.³⁹⁶

³⁹² D'Evelyn & Mills, 1967; Szabo, 2008: 52. These accounts can be compared with Anglo-Saxon accounts of sea-faring saints: e.g., the lives of Godric and Cuthbert (Coulton, 1918a; Giles, 1910); Szabo, 2008: 26. A more violent encounter is recounted by Irish scholar Dicuill, working at the court of Charlemagne in Aachen, who informed by Priscian's account of whales around 'Ceylon', describes "whales as large as mountains" with "terrible spine[s], bringing death and fate beneath their savage mouths" especially to "those who deserve it". Tierney, 1967: 81-83, xii.31.

³⁹³ See 137-38.

³⁹⁴ Szabo, 2008: 1.

³⁹⁵ See above, 130.

³⁹⁶ Garmonsway, 1939.

While apparently confirming a reluctance among Anglo-Saxons to indulge in whale hunting, Ælfric's Fisherman provides a clear insight into the knowledge of the creatures held by those living and working in the vicinity of the ocean.

This is also expressed in the runic inscription preserved on the front panel of the Franks Casket (Fig. 3.21B), which by general consensus is transcribed:

Fisc flodu ahof on fergen-berig
Warþ gas-ric grorn þær he on greut giswom
Hronæs ban.

And translated as:

The fish beat up the seas on to the mountainous cliff;
Gasric³⁹⁷ became sad when he swam aground onto the shingle.
Whale's bone.³⁹⁸

While reflecting the Physiologus tradition this inscription, framed as a riddle, again speaks to responses inspired by encounters with stranded whales among Anglo-Saxons of the early eighth century.³⁹⁹

With the decline of elephant ivory in the eighth century, and the introduction of walrus in the early tenth century, it is understandable that there is no reference to the walrus in Anglo-Saxon England, before *c.*900. The remote regions of the north and general lack of knowledge is a likely explanation for the severe dearth of literary mention of the creature, either in legend, ecclesiastic or economic contexts. The most recognized account is that of Ottar, a Tromsø traveller and merchant who visited Alfred's court in the late ninth century,⁴⁰⁰ which is included in the contemporary Old English version of Orosius' *Historiarum adversum Paganos Libri Septem*, dated to 416/17.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁷ The term 'Gasric' has been generally translated to the 'King of Terror', but Waxenberger has proposed that it was the name of the whale, translating to something like 'the one strong in life or power'. Karkov, 2011: 147. For more see Waxenberger, forthcoming, 2009, 2011.

³⁹⁸ Hough & Corbett, 2013: 106 offers the most recent translation, but for others see: Dalton, 1909: 27-28, cat. 30; Longhurst, 1926:65, cat. 1; Beckwith, 1972: 117, cat. 1; Webster & Backhouse, 1991: 101-03, cat. 70; Webster, 2012b: 18.

³⁹⁹ See further, Williamson, 1982; Porter, 1995; Bitterli, 2009; Webster, 2012b; see also Szabo, 2008.

⁴⁰⁰ Lund, 1984. Lund uses "Ohthere" while Szabo uses "Ottar"; I will be using the latter throughout.

⁴⁰¹ Lund, 1984: 6, 8.

Paying tribute to Alfred with walrus tusks and skins, as well as feathers of birds, whalebone, and ship ropes made from whale hide and sealskin, Ottar spins a tale of adventure and wealth, travelling to the land of the Beormas where “he, one of six, killed sixty [walrus] in two days”.⁴⁰² It is not clear what language Ottar was speaking when regaling his audience, and as the Anglo-Saxons had no word for ‘walrus’, the use of *horshwælum* must have been a new compound created by the author based on Ottar’s name of the creature.⁴⁰³ Northern Scandinavians would have known the walrus much better and therefore had a greater range of vocabulary for both whales and walrus.⁴⁰⁴ Ottar was specific about the reasons for killing walrus as they have “very fine ivory in their tusks”.⁴⁰⁵ It is notable that at this point Ottar/the translator refers to the walrus as a *hwæl*, while distinguishing between its size and those of other whales, claiming that it is much smaller and that the best whale-hunting was in his own country where whales “are forty-eight ells long, the biggest fifty ells long.”⁴⁰⁶ In fact, it is only the mention of tusks in this account that differentiates the walrus from the whale, perhaps highlighting the lack of experience Anglo-Saxons had with either species. Given that walrus ivory has not been dated to Anglo-Saxon contexts before c.900, it is possible that the tusks brought by Ottar to Alfred’s court were the first to reach Anglo-Saxon England, and that from this contact was born the practice of importing walrus tusks, and ensuring their status as highly prized exotica among the social elite and craftsmen.⁴⁰⁷

While much of the literature relating to elephant, whalebone and walrus ivory circulating in Anglo-Saxon England expresses admiration for its material, appearance and value, consistently perceiving it a luxury, the accounts of the animals themselves were influenced both by long-standing traditions that considered the creatures to be monstrous

⁴⁰² Szabo, 2008: 2.

⁴⁰³ Fell, 1984: 58. This is the only recorded instance of the term *horshwæl* in Old English (literally ‘horse-whale’).

⁴⁰⁴ Fell, 1984: 58, 61. Snorri’s thirteenth-century *Edda* in contrast offers twenty-six different words for walrus and whale (against the Old English two), even taking into account some may be poetic synonyms and others might be names of different whale species. It must be noted that there were words for ivory, ivory objects (i.e. *Tannbagall* is ‘a crozier of walrus’, *tannhjölt* ‘a hilt of walrus ivory’), and ivory carver’s craft and tools.

⁴⁰⁵ Lund, 1984: 19.

⁴⁰⁶ Lund, 1984: 20.

⁴⁰⁷ Fell, 1984: 61.

and dangerous, unfamiliar and awe-inspiring, further enforcing perceptions of the value of their ivory.

3.5 Conclusion: the Legacy of Anglo-Saxon Ivory

Much of this chapter has been devoted to examination of the surviving examples of both the extant carved and archaeological evidence for ivory in Anglo-Saxon England, exploring how the objects may have arrived in the region between the fifth and eleventh centuries. The sheer number of elephant, whalebone and walrus ivory objects involved clearly highlights the endurance of the medium throughout the period despite the many changes in supply and demand (Table V). While many of the pieces have been dated generally to one century or another, it is clear that at no point during the Anglo-Saxon period is there a total lack of ivory (or ivory-like) material in artistic or utilitarian use; in fact, it is entirely possible that around the middle of the tenth century all three types of ivory were in use simultaneously.

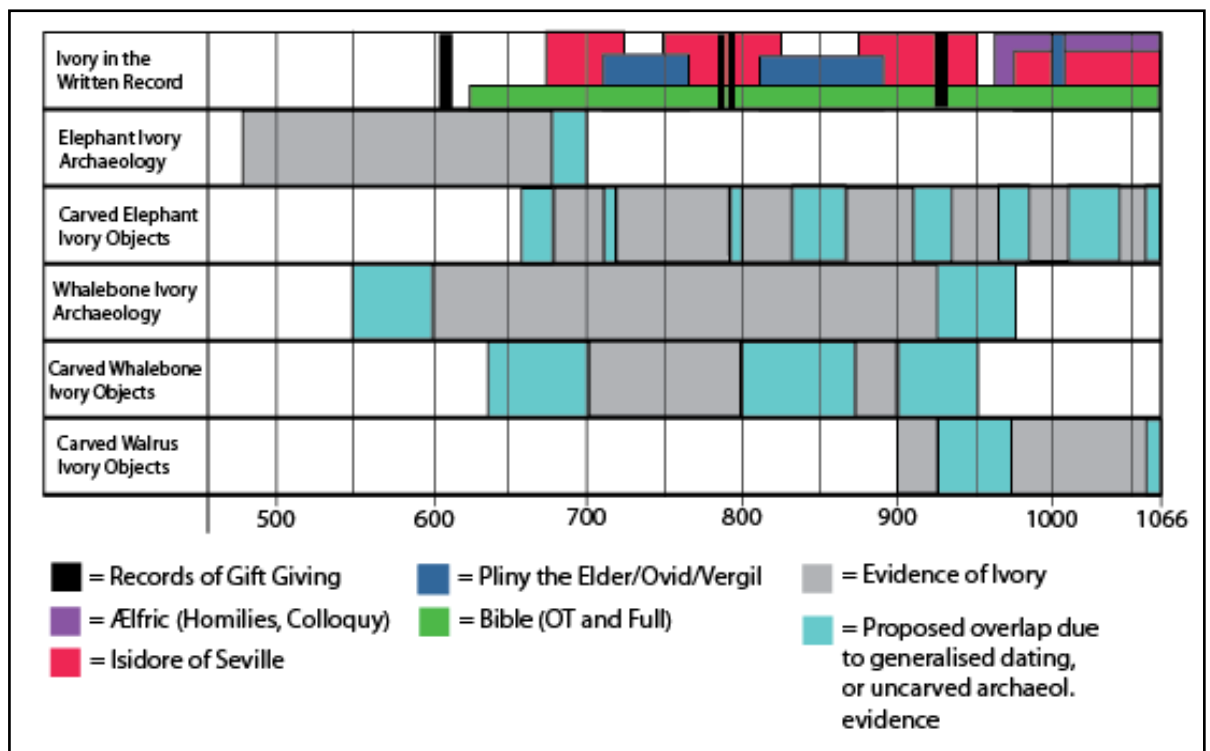


Table V: Timeline of Ivory in Anglo-Saxon England

This clearly demonstrates that previous assumptions of ignorance and apathy attributed to Anglo-Saxon craftsmen and patrons by modern scholars must be re-addressed. While ivory was by no means as prevalent in early medieval England as it was elsewhere in

Europe and the Mediterranean, there is now a growing body of evidence suggesting that ivory was well known by the Anglo-Saxons, who were not only aware of its uses, techniques of creation and animal source, but also assisted in the dissemination and spread of knowledge about the material. This awareness of a sense of luxury, value and exotica was the legacy of ivory in Anglo-Saxon England and allowed the media to become a part of the artistic milieu, despite any fluctuations in supply and use of different types of ivory.

Against this background and what it reveals about the value (in all senses) and the effects of cross-Channel traffic of materials and fashions, it is now possible to turn to consider the different 'styles' in which the ivories were carved and the question of 'Anglo-Saxon style' that dominates the scholarly literature on the subject.

CHAPTER 4
ANGLO-SAXON IVORIES AND THE QUESTION OF STYLE:
CREATIVE RESPONSES AND ARTISTIC “FIRSTS”

4.1 Introduction

From the brief outline of the development of the study of style within the overall subject of Anglo-Saxon art already presented,⁴⁰⁸ it can be said that from the mid twentieth century, scholars have begun to attend to the challenge presented by the concepts of style and stylistic analysis demonstrated within the arts of Anglo-Saxon England, as well as the focus of modern art historians on this subject.⁴⁰⁹ Fred Orton has perhaps posed the question most succinctly, asking

what are scholars doing when they analyse surviving examples of Anglo-Saxon [art ...] in terms of style? What unacknowledged or unexplained assumptions are they appropriating and organising? And to what effect?⁴¹⁰

Continuing on, Orton questions how scholars of early medieval art have acknowledged and organised extant examples: whether by labelling objects according to their perceived stylistic features, or whether consideration of social, political, ecclesiastical and cultural contexts are taken into account when attempting to “situate” the objects stylistically, or (perhaps most detrimental to modern studies) are the objects provenanced on the basis of attributions made in earlier art historical scholarship. Style as a modern concept is complex, as Orton has explained:

style is taken to be continuous, stable, unchanging, persistent, or reiterated shape or outward appearance of a discrete object or several objects; it is also the continuous stable, unchanging, persistent, or reiterated component parts and distinctive attributes of that object or objects, and the way that they represent something or make it known; the term is also used to refer not only to objects but also to the practices of an individual or a society at an advanced stage of development.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁸ See Chapter 2.

⁴⁰⁹ See e.g.: Dodwell, 1982; Michelli, 2003; Orton, 2003; Gannon, 2003; Webster, 2012a.

⁴¹⁰ Orton, 2003: 31.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*: 33; Schapiro, 1953: 287-312.

In this respect, the general tendency to ignore the ivories of Anglo-Saxon England supports the understanding that the attribution of these objects is often based on earlier art historical scholarship, where the tendency has been to simply agree with the majority when other options might be explored and utilised to greater effect in future discussions on both the subject of stylistic analysis of the ivories and Anglo-Saxon art generally.⁴¹²

If however, Orton's strict definition is used to assess the ivories it can be anticipated that at least one problem might arise: namely, that while the date and provenance of some ivories attributed to the Insular world are uncontested, others display characteristics, iconographies and carving techniques which, while being recognised as part of the Anglo-Saxon artistic traditions, are also seen to correspond with wider European traditions. Orton identifies the problem of studying style as stemming from the art historian's commitment to the idea of style as a "constant form and formal analysis", failing to acknowledge "how that form and its component parts, attributes or traits communicates and fixes, disseminates and reiterates, the religious, moral, philosophical, political and economic ideas and practices of its determining 'context'".⁴¹³ In keeping with this, the idea of Anglo-Saxon England is a modern concept, much like the practice of stylistic analysis, while the contemporary early medieval patrons and artists in the region in c.500-1066 would have not considered themselves restricted by labels of nationality, style or artistic trends. This is not to say that those living in the early middle ages were not aware of their place in the world, and nor was there a complete ignorance of the numerous stylistic movements being shared and adopted between Anglo-Saxon England and the Continent. However, the modern dichotomy of demonstrated by the idea that the ivories were created on one side of the Channel or the other with stylistic influence only stemming from Continental sources, is to ignore the overwhelming evidence of human movement within and out of Anglo-Saxon England. It also ignores the fact that thriving artistic communities on either side of the Channel took inspiration from each other and translated such stylistic flourishes into their own personal (and often localised) vernacular, a "creative response" as opposed to 'mere copying'.⁴¹⁴

⁴¹² See Chapter 2.

⁴¹³ Orton, 2003: 38.

⁴¹⁴ For more on copying in the Middle Ages, Alexander, 1992; Ingham, 2015.

It is the aim of this chapter therefore to dispute this dichotomy and to analyse the styles of both the uncontested and contested ivories of Anglo-Saxon England, as they have been presented throughout the last century in the scholarship, and to provide new insights for future discussions and applications of “Anglo-Saxon style”. This said, stylistic analysis can play an important (if arguably incomplete) role in the process of dating and provenancing objects that have little or no known history, contested or uncontested. This is particularly important here as most of the ivories considered within this study have no recorded history before the nineteenth century, unless found within archaeological contexts, which can narrow the scope, but does not answer all questions. In analysing the published opinions on the styles of the ivories generally, it will be demonstrated that Orton’s “problem of style” has been fully realised as many publications have refused to acknowledge (or completely ignored) the wider, multi-disciplinary approach to assessing the influence of a range of factors stemming from the context of Anglo-Saxon England that could very well have supported the creative, stylistic output demonstrated by both the uncontested and contested ivories.

This chapter will by no means present an all-inclusive analysis of those ivories that have been considered stylistically within the scholarship; rather it attempts to highlight those that have provoked the most discussion and, by contrast, those that have provoked little. In revisiting the previous scholarship while reconsidering the stylistic aspects of the ivories, insight will be provided as to how our modern understanding of these objects has been affected by the scholarship thus far, and will allow for further future assessment of the objects when analysed from stylistic standpoints. This will give both a more general sense of the problem of stylistic analysis when applied to a group of objects that (uncontested or not) provide evidence for the use of a spectrum of styles across the centuries, while also presenting a wide range of stylistic comparanda for the ivories.

4.2 The Uncontested Ivories and Anglo-Saxon Styles

There are a number of ivories that have elicited little scholarly dissent concerning their label, “Anglo-Saxon”. However, against a background that saw “Anglo-Saxon England” as a rapidly shifting series of small kingdoms under consistently changing spheres of political authority and rule over the course of some four centuries the question arises as to how useful the term ‘Anglo-Saxon Style’ might be. Artistic styles, iconographies,

craftsmen and materials travelled extensively in the early medieval world. Thus, even these “uncontested” ivories provide no constant or continuum of stylistic motifs, as suggested by Orton, but rather a collection of specific (and widespread) artistic conventions circulating in Anglo-Saxon England over a considerable period of time. If the art historical concept of style focuses on the deployment of constants, a visual grammar and vocabulary that is taken to be continuous and unchanging over the course of a group of objects, component parts, or artistic practices by an individual or society, and in this case, specifically that of Anglo-Saxon craftsmen, the question arises as to what happens when the style of the uncontested Anglo-Saxon objects is deemed to be inconstant, as changing noticeably over the course of short periods of time or within/across regions? This said, it is not the intention here to contest the uncontested, but rather to re-assess the style of the uncontested ivories in the contexts of the changing social, religious, political, economic and cultural fluctuations of Anglo-Saxon England, and their likely point of production within that region and the early medieval period.

4.2a The Eighth and Early Ninth Centuries

Considerations of Anglo-Saxon ivories over the past century have, for the most part, dealt in generalisations rather than specifics, allowing a small group of uncontested ivories to represent a much larger, and decidedly varied, group of objects. While used interchangeably, four stand out as being used to highlight the art of ivory for the entire Anglo-Saxon period: the Franks casket (cat. 2, Fig. 2.2),⁴¹⁵ the Gandersheim casket (cat. 6, Fig. 2.13), the Larling fragment (cat. 3, Fig. 3.19) and the Blythburgh tablet (cat. 4, Fig. 3.20). Not unsurprisingly therefore, the lesser known uncontested ivories have been given little attention by scholars or a wider audience. This is not to say that those four do not deserve our attention, but for the sake of brevity discussion will be limited to a consideration of the more recent scholarship published on them. The Franks and Gandersheim Caskets (*c.*700 and late eighth-century respectively) both present complex stylistic and carving techniques, but have generated (nearly) complete agreement as to

⁴¹⁵ Note that all references to figures (i.e. current location, date, material, etc.) is included in the illustrations to chapter four. For brevity’s sake, this information was placed alongside the objects themselves. If footnotes are included, it is because these objects have been referred to in texts that are used within the wider arguments put forth here.

their Anglo-Saxon provenance.⁴¹⁶ Unique within the corpus of Anglo-Saxon ivories, both Caskets nevertheless present motifs that recur across the period, even though they are apparently separated by nearly a century.

While many earlier scholars considered them in detail,⁴¹⁷ Webster, the most recent scholar to publish on the Franks casket, noted that its style is unlike anything else amongst the surviving art of the seventh and eighth centuries, but considers it consistent within the object itself.⁴¹⁸ Its linearity, she observes, has a “kinship with earlier Anglo-Saxon art”, and cites the helmets and other soldierly gear of the late sixth and seventh centuries, as well as the Insular character of the many animals contained in the panels (birds, a horse, wolves, dog-like beasts, winged lions, and bird-headed snakes) to demonstrate its “clear debt to the Hiberno-Saxon manuscript tradition” (Fig. 4.1A, 4.2).⁴¹⁹

The style of the Gandersheim Casket was most recently reconsidered by Richard Bailey, Carol Farr and Leslie Webster at the *Das Gandersheimer Runekästchen Internationales Kolloquium* (2000);⁴²⁰ here Bailey focused on the zoomorphic interlace, which he described as “dissolving bi-peds”⁴²¹ in which the body and interlace are clearly connected (or ‘dissolving’) but which are distinct from one another (Fig. 2.13B). He compared this stylistic feature with motifs found on stone sculpture and metalwork across Southwest England, Mercia, Northumbria, and even Scotland, concluding that the form of the ornament characterised “a period of art, and not a particular region”,⁴²² before settling

⁴¹⁶ Goldschmidt, 1918: II, 55, cat. 185 a-e, plate LIX; *Ibid.*: II, cat. 186, 187; Brøndsted, 1924:139-40; Longhurst, 1926: II, 67-8, pls 13-14; Kendrick, 1938: 169-70, pl. 70.2; Beckwith, 1972: 118.

⁴¹⁷ Previously Goldschmidt (1918: II, cat. 186, 187) considered the Franks Casket to be either Anglo-Saxon or Byzantine and dated it to *c.*800; Dalton (1909: cat. 30) also highlighted external influences (citing Eastern and Merovingian parallels of eighth-century date), but identified it as Northumbrian; Longhurst (1926: 1) placed it unequivocally in Northumbria, in the first half of the eighth century, as did Kendrick (1938: 125) and Beckwith (1972: 13-18, cat. 1, fig. 3-7). See e.g. Dalton, 1909; Goldschmidt, 1918; Longhurst, 1926: 1 & 11; Kendrick, 1938: 169-70; Webster & Backhouse, 1991: 101-3, cat. 70; Bailey, 2000; Webster, 1999; 2000, 2012a, 2012b.

⁴¹⁸ Webster, 2012a: 92; see also Webster & Backhouse, 1991: 101-3.

⁴¹⁹ Webster, 2012a: 96.

⁴²⁰ Bailey, 2000; Farr, 2000; Webster, 2000. For earlier scholarship, see Goldschmidt 1918; Brøndsted, 1924; Longhurst, 1926; Kendrick, 1938; and Beckwith, 1972; who all agreed a late eighth- or early ninth-century dating on stylistic grounds. Goldschmidt (II, cat. 185), however, saw it emerging from Canterbury or southern England; Brønsted, (1924: 139, fig. 115) considered it to reveal a mix of southern and northern English styles; Longhurst (1926: cat. 2) identified Mercian origins, as did Kendrick (1938: 169-70); Beckwith (cat. 2, figs. 10-13) however regarded it as Northumbrian.

⁴²¹ Bailey, 2000: 45.

⁴²² *Ibid.*: 45.

specifically (due to style and combination of motifs within the casket) on several comparable elements featured on stone sculptures found in the area around Peterborough: namely, Castor, Fletton and Peterborough (monastery), and Breedon-on-the-Hill in Leicestershire (see e.g. Fig. 4.3, 4.4A-B).⁴²³

Farr explored it further but examined the available eighth and ninth century Anglo-Saxon manuscripts for the stylistic characteristics she deemed comparable to those on the casket if only to “give a general, relative date and to reaffirm previously published opinions as to the place of origin”, function and possible context of use.⁴²⁴ She thus focused on four stylistic elements:

the placement of single or pairs of animals and interlace within square or rectangular panels or as inhabitants of stylised trees or plants...the types of animals depicted and their positions...the disk of trumpet spirals with the forequarters of four animals placed at the corners...the plant ornament [that] is also unusual in some of its details.⁴²⁵

She explained that the display of one or two of these individual elements would have been seen as early as the mid eighth century but the combination of all four only began to appear consistently in late eighth and ninth century manuscripts, “especially in those considered to have strong continental influences or which may have been produced in continental contexts with Anglo-Saxon associations”.⁴²⁶ While Wearmouth-Jarrow and Canterbury, specifically producing the Durham Cassiodorus (Fig. 4.5), *Vespasian Psalter* and *Stockholm Codex Aureus* (Fig. 4.6, 4.7A), were considered as two centres offering the necessary “continental contacts and reasons to emulate Mediterranean Christian culture”,⁴²⁷ Farr suggested that the ‘Tiberius Group’ of manuscripts produced at Canterbury and dated to the 820s-30s, provide the most coherent parallels: namely, the borders of the St Matthew portrait in the *Cutbercht Gospels* (Fig. 4.8a), the large-eyed bipeds above the canon tables in the *St Petersburg gospels* (Fig. 4.8B), and the beasts found in the *Barberini Gospels* (Fig. 4.9A-B).

⁴²³ *Ibid.*: 46-50.

⁴²⁴ Farr, 2000: 53.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*: 53.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*: 53.

⁴²⁷ Farr, 2000: 54.

Webster, on the other hand, related the stylistic features of the Casket to metalwork, bone and ivory carving, something she has repeated in her recent publications.⁴²⁸ Her analysis places the Casket within the context of common ‘house shaped’ shrine/reliquaries of the period, noting particularly the “controlled and compartmentalised” decoration, making it unique among the other containers.⁴²⁹ After agreeing with Baily and Farr, she went on to identify the animal art in metalwork comparable to that of the Casket in some detail, citing: the eighth-century Leicester brooch (Fig. 4.10A), the contemporary River Witham pins (Fig. 4.10B), and the cover of the early ninth-century Lindau Gospels (Fig.4.11), with their display of “textured, writhing bodies ... and their outspread clutching paws”; the sphinx-like creature similar to those found in ‘southumbrian’ strap ends; the numerous Trehiddle-style metalwork objects from Norfolk and Lincolnshire (Fig. 4.12A-B), with their “distinctively regional preference for bag-bellied beasts”;⁴³⁰ the canine creatures found on the lower arm of the late eighth-century Rupertus cross (Fig. 4.13),⁴³¹ which are also displayed on the brooches and pins from Leicester and Suffolk as well as some of the early ninth-century brooches from the Pentney hoard in Norfolk (Fig. 4.14),⁴³² and finally, the birds on the casket which she related to the mid eighth-century Ormside bowl (Fig. 4.15), and again to the Rupertus cross (Fig. 4.13).⁴³³ Examining the coincidence of trumpet-style roundels with beasts and plant ornament, Webster invoked further stylistic parallels in the corpus of Anglo-Saxon metalwork,⁴³⁴ but of interest is her comparison of the style of the Gandersheim Casket’s carving to that of other ivory and bone objects of the period.

Naming the contested ivory Zoomorphic panel (cat. 8, fig. 4.16A), the Virgin and Apostles panel (cat. 10, Fig. 4.16B; hereafter Virgin-Apostles), and the (uncontested) whalebone Larling fragment (cat. 3, Fig. 3.19), Webster considered these three pieces as similar to the casket in their use of “animal head volutes” with their “distinctive long ears and pointing tongues” (Figs 4.16C), all of which demonstrate recurrent themes of this

⁴²⁸ Webster, 2012a: 106, 140, 167.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*: 167.

⁴³⁰ Webster, 2000: 66.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*: 66. Also known as the Bischofshofen cross, here it will be referred to as the Rupertus cross.

⁴³² *Ibid.*: 66; see also Webster & Backhouse, 1991: cat. 66b, 69c, 133, 186, 187c, d.

⁴³³ Webster, 2000: 67; Webster & Backhouse, 1991: cat. 134.

⁴³⁴ Webster, 2000: 68-69.

period, but she still identified the Zoomorphic and Virgin-Apostles panels as “continental products made under Anglo-Saxon influence”,⁴³⁵ while asserting that the Gandersheim Casket and the Larling panel fragment share similarities in their rare material make-up, as well as their use of bi-pedal maned creatures with folded wings.⁴³⁶ Here it is interesting to note that while Webster concludes that there are several key stylistic characteristics shared between the (uncontested) Anglo-Saxon Gandersheim Casket and the (contested) Zoomorphic and Virgin-Apostles panels, she maintains that they were made on separate sides of the Channel.⁴³⁷

The Larling piece and Blythburgh tablet have been treated in more recent (if less lengthy) scholarship. The fragmentary Larling panel has been considered uncontested in its “Anglo-Saxon-ness”, having been found in an archaeological context in 1970 at Larling, near the church dedicated to Æthelberht of East Anglia (d. 794), although such a find-spot need not of course imply Anglo-Saxon manufacture. Indeed, having been closely related in technique and style to the Gandersheim Casket, it is interesting that this whalebone carving has not been linked to the styles exhibited by pieces from continental centres as have the other panels that include the same type of zoomorphic interlace.⁴³⁸ Of course, the use of bi-peds amongst an interlace that ‘dissolves’ from their bodies while remaining distinct is a feature of both the Larling fragment and Gandersheim Casket where it was noted by Bailey. There are, in addition, other examples: namely, the creatures on the late eighth-century Rothbury cross in Northumbria (Fig. 4.17A), the late eighth-century stone friezes from Breedon-on-the-Hill (Fig. 4.4B), the ninth-century cross head with animals feeding on vines from St Michael’s Church (Cropthorne), Worcestershire (Fig. 4.18A), and the ninth-century bi-peds of the Elstow cross shaft (Fig. 4.18B).

Webster also linked the Larling fragment with a high-status context, as the coins of Æthelberht of East Anglia and Offa of Mercia also displayed the Romulus and Remus motif featured on the plaque, noting that the motif was considered to symbolise Rome and the Church nourishing the faithful (Fig. 4.19, 4.20).⁴³⁹ Regardless of such symbolic considerations, stylistically, the remnants of a cross and prominent vine-scroll motif

⁴³⁵ Ibid.: 68; Webster & Backhouse, 1991: 179-80, cat. 140.

⁴³⁶ Webster, 2000: 68; Webster & Backhouse, 1991: 179, cat. 139.

⁴³⁷ Webster, 2000: 68; Webster & Backhouse, 1991: n. 14, cat. 140.

⁴³⁸ See the Zoomorphic and Virgin-Apostles panels noted above.

⁴³⁹ Webster & Backhouse, 1991: 179, cat. 139; see also Gannon, 2003: 147.

preserved on the piece suggest at the very least a religious patron, if not institution, was responsible for its creation, and it may well have been used as a book cover. While an Anglo-Saxon (ecclesiastical) provenance for the fragment thus seems likely, and a date of *c.* 800, it nevertheless serves to raise questions, along with the Gandersheim casket, as to the presumed continental nature of the contested ivories with which it has been associated.⁴⁴⁰

Found prior to 1902 on the land formerly belonging to Blythburgh priory,⁴⁴¹ the Blythburgh tablet (cat. 4, Fig. 3.20) displays a quadripartite knot design carved (in low relief) within a square, pellet frame and set with five copper-alloy rivets on the front; a rectangular panel is recessed at the back with two holes for thongs or other such attachments, an arrangement that closely relates it to late Roman and early medieval writing tablets (Fig. 4.21).⁴⁴² Less ornate in its decoration than the other ivories under consideration here (both uncontested and contested), it is worth noting that the interlace featured on this tablet, although not hitherto discussed in the scholarship, is nevertheless reminiscent of that found on the late seventh-century carpet page of St John's Gospel from the Lindisfarne Gospels (Fig. 4.22A) and the late seventh-century binding of the St Cuthbert Gospel of St John (Fig. 4.22B).⁴⁴³ Such parallels would seem to locate it stylistically to the north of Anglo-Saxon England in a late seventh- or eighth-century context.

Although there has been some divergence in opinion regarding the possible places of origin of these four pieces, stylistic analyses have consistently identified them as Anglo-Saxon, and through close observation of their stylistic details have agreed that they are best dated to the eighth and early ninth centuries.

4.2b The Tenth and Eleventh Centuries

Further scholarly consensus of opinion regarding later ivories deemed to be Anglo-Saxon is lacking, as no ivories have been placed in the later ninth or early tenth centuries through stylistic analysis; all have been identified as mid tenth to mid eleventh century in date. One

⁴⁴⁰ See further below, Section 4.3.

⁴⁴¹ Webster & Backhouse, 1991: 81, cat. 65.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*: 81, cat. 65. Webster compares this tablet to a set of panels found in Springmount Bog, Ballyhutherland, Co. Antrim, Ireland (Webster & Backhouse, 1991: 80, cat. 64a-b).

⁴⁴³ Webster & Backhouse, 1991: no. 133; Scharer, 2001: 69-75; Breay & Meehan, 2015.

of these is the triangular walrus ivory decorated with two angels allegedly recovered from a garden near St Cross in Winchester (cat. 26; Fig. 4.23).⁴⁴⁴ In this case, Goldschmidt compared the two “floating angels” with miniatures produced by the Winchester school and so dated it to the first half of the eleventh century,⁴⁴⁵ while both Dalton and Mitchell also emphasised the close connection between the angels and the figural style displayed in manuscripts of the Winchester school, dated it to *c.*1000 (Dalton) and the first half of the eleventh century (Mitchell).⁴⁴⁶ Kendrick also dated it to *c.*1000, stating that it was “an admirable instance of the translation of the manuscript style into sculpture” and deemed it “proof of the Saxon intention to translate the Winchester manuscript style into other mediums.”⁴⁴⁷ Longhurst however placed it in the last quarter of the tenth century, agreeing, as did Dalton and Mitchell that it was part of a book cover or casket lid portraying a central Christ in Majesty surrounded by angels.⁴⁴⁸ Like Longhurst, Beckwith argued for a date in the later tenth century, citing the *c.*966 New Minster Charter illumination of Edgar offering the Charter to Christ in his discussion of the ivory, pointing to the winged angels with outstretched arms (Fig. 4.24A).⁴⁴⁹

This particular pose of the angels however was also widespread in Winchester style art of the latter half of the tenth century and through the eleventh as Mitchell observed.⁴⁵⁰ Talbot-Rice recognised this in his consideration of the Winchester angels as “heralding the superb stone angels at Westminster some two centuries later in date in the elegant sway of their movements, but at the same time they recall the Saxon angels of Bradford-on-Avon”, Wiltshire (Fig. 4.24B,C), while also linking it stylistically with the New Minster Charter, and so dated the ivory to the same period.⁴⁵¹ Webster’s most recent publication has little to add, reiterating the findings of the earlier scholarship, but suggesting that the ivory likely acted as a roof gable of a small reliquary or book cover with the angels swooping towards a (now lost) image of Christ.⁴⁵²

⁴⁴⁴ While not impossible, there is no record of this find spot.

⁴⁴⁵ Goldschmidt, 1926: IV, 55, fig. 276, pl. LXXIII.

⁴⁴⁶ Longhurst, 1926: 78, no. XIV; Dalton, 1919-20: 45; Mitchell, 1923: II, 162-3, pl. IIIA.

⁴⁴⁷ Kendrick, 1949: 44, pl. XXXVIII, fig. 3.

⁴⁴⁸ Longhurst, 1924: 78, no. XIV. Longhurst gives no explanation for her late tenth-century dating.

⁴⁴⁹ Beckwith, 1972: 34, 38, cat. 16, fig. 39; Kendrick also made this connection, 1949: 44.

⁴⁵⁰ See more, Mitchell, 1923.

⁴⁵¹ Talbot-Rice, 1952: 165-6, illus. 33.

⁴⁵² Webster, 2012a: 199, illus. 161.

Five later, tenth and eleventh century objects accepted to be Anglo-Saxon, although rarely mentioned outside of catalogues, are the Alcester Tau-Cross (cat. 21, Fig. 4.25A), the Heribert Tau-Cross (cat. 22, Fig. 4.25B), the *Agnus Dei* Tau-Cross (cat. 24, Fig. 4.26A), Quatrefoil Virgin and Child Enthroned (cat. 29, Fig. 4.26B) and the Beverly Crozier (cat. 55, Fig. 4.27). Stylistically, these ivories present a distinctive approach to framing, interlace, and figural carving,⁴⁵³ and interestingly, all are made of morse, or walrus ivory, which as noted was used during this period in Anglo-Saxon England as a new and exotic import from the far north.⁴⁵⁴

Tracing the iconography of the Alcester Tau-Cross, which is generally dated to c.1020 (Fig. 4.25A), Dalton also invoked a detailed list of comparable objects that allow for stylistic analysis of, primarily, the foliage, which can be compared with that featured in tenth-century Winchester style objects, characterised as displaying a “combination of rich foliage, monsters and interlaced work”.⁴⁵⁵ Longhurst, acknowledging Dalton’s work, also discussed the tau-cross’s style in the light of Winchester art but deemed it “a rather freer and more varied type than the rather monotonous leaf scroll common to the Winchester borders”,⁴⁵⁶ further explaining the “monumental quality”⁴⁵⁷ of the figures as closely aligned with those found on the Seal of Godwin and Godgytha (Fig. 2.7). Talbot-Rice too linked the Tau-cross with the Winchester style (specifically the ivory carving of the Two Angels, and the seal),⁴⁵⁸ while Beckwith continued the discussion, linking the style of the figures and floral ornament to numerous eleventh-century objects, noting almost in passing that the figure of Christ is “related perhaps to the eleventh-century box carved with the miracle of St Lawrence and to the Transfiguration and Ascension reliefs”;⁴⁵⁹ the floral ornament ‘depends’ on the foliage of the Benedictional of Æthelwold (Fig. 4.28); and the crucified Christ recalls other ivories like the Heribert Tau-Cross (Fig. 4.25B), a small reliquary crucifixion in the treasury of Chartres (cat. 35),⁴⁶⁰ and a few ivory crucifixions

⁴⁵³ See below, Section 4.3.

⁴⁵⁴ See Chapter 3.

⁴⁵⁵ Dalton 1909: 34-5, no. 32.

⁴⁵⁶ Longhurst, 1926: 11-12, 75-76, no. XII.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*: 12.

⁴⁵⁸ Talbot-Rice, 1952: 166, illus. 40.

⁴⁵⁹ Beckwith, 1972: 52, cat. 19, 21, 22.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*: 52, cat. 31, illus. 67.

illustrated in this study (cat. 34, 39, 42).⁴⁶¹ More recently, Webster has discussed the ivory in terms of its relation to late Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, citing specifically the “particular combination of a densely profuse acanthus frieze, interlaced animal heads and small-scale scenes” featured in the *c.*1020 Grimbald Gospels (Fig. 4.29A),⁴⁶² as well as the griffin heads on the volutes as similar to those on the initial B of the Bury Psalter, made in Christ Church Canterbury, likely in the first quarter of the eleventh century (Fig. 4.29B).⁴⁶³

The *Agnus Dei* Tau-Cross dug up at Water Lane in London in 1893 displays the *Agnus Dei* in a mandorla, holding a cross in a pellet carved circle supported by two angels on one side, and a seraph with folded wings in a pellet mandorla supported by two griffons on the other. Longhurst dated the piece to the early twelfth century but confusingly invoked early ninth-century sculptural (iconographic) comparanda.⁴⁶⁴ Perhaps more convincing comparisons could be made with the motifs on the late stone cross-heads in Durham Cathedral (*c.*1025-50) which shows both the *Agnus Dei* and a seraph, one above the other (Fig. 4.30),⁴⁶⁵ or with the Heribert Tau-Cross that shows four wingless angels on either side of Christ in the mandorla. Longhurst also linked the ivory’s physical shape to the Alcester Tau-Cross and presented the possibility that the (lost) volutes on the *Agnus Dei* Tau-Cross may have been similar to the surviving gryphon-head volute on the Alcester ivory.⁴⁶⁶ Talbot-Rice considered the piece to be “very rough and provincial” and dated it to “the period of overlap between the Conquest and the beginning of the twelfth century”,⁴⁶⁷ and while Beckwith agreed with Longhurst,⁴⁶⁸ Williamson deems the ivory to be a mid eleventh-century creation due to its inferior quality (compared with the Alcester Tau-Cross), and considers that its “form and composition indicate a pre-Conquest origin”.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶¹ See below, Chapter 5, Section 5.3c

⁴⁶² Webster, 1984: 119, no. 120.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*: 119, no. 120.

⁴⁶⁴ Longhurst, 0000: 00.

⁴⁶⁵ Williamson, 2010: 247, no. 63; see, CASSS vol. I.

⁴⁶⁶ Longhurst, 1926: 87, no. XXVI.

⁴⁶⁷ Talbot-Rice, 1952: 166.

⁴⁶⁸ Beckwith, 1972: cat. 57.

⁴⁶⁹ Williamson, 2010: 247, no. 63.

The ivory carved with the Quatrefoil Virgin and Child Enthroned, now held at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford,⁴⁷⁰ also provides an interesting stylistic study. Talbot-Rice assigned it to around the year 1040, linking it to the later Winchester work as well as stone sculpture in Bradford-on-Avon due to its “considerable sculpturesque feeling” (Fig. 4.24C).⁴⁷¹ In passing, Beckwith vaguely compared the posture of the Virgin to the ‘dancing’ seated figure of Abraham in the eleventh-century Bury Psalter due to its “fluttering style”;⁴⁷² he could have further noted the quatrefoil border in which Abraham sits, which can be compared with that surrounding the Virgin, as well as the arms of the angel outstretched towards Abraham, which are similar to those of the now lost angels flanking the Virgin’s head, and their ‘flicked’ drapery so evident in the ivory (Fig. 4.31).

Next to these three ivories, the Heribert Tau-Cross and the Beverly Crosier have been published least. In fact, Goldschmidt was the only scholar to have commented in detail on the Heribert ivory, highlighting the fact that there was no evidence to substantiate the local tradition that the ivory and staff were a gift from the saint (c.970–1021), while (according to Beckwith) accepting that the style of the carving did not contradict such a provenance.⁴⁷³ Beckwith did mention it, repeating Goldschmidt’s observations, and, as noted, linked it vaguely to the Alcester Tau-Cross, as well as the Chartres reliquary panel (cat. 35),⁴⁷⁴ and a number of small pectoral crosses now held by the V&A (cat. 36–38),⁴⁷⁵ the British Museum (cat. 39),⁴⁷⁶ the Fitzwilliam Museum (cat. 41),⁴⁷⁷ and the National Museum at Copenhagen (cat. 46).⁴⁷⁸ As for the Beverly Crosier, the only scholars to discuss it have been Francis Wormald and John Hunt, who proposed that (due to its

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.: 120-21, no. 122. Although rare iconographically in its depiction of the Virgin and Child on tenth or eleventh century ivories (as opposed to the more popular subjects of the Crucifixion, *Majestas*, or *Agnus Dei*). See further, Chapter 5.

⁴⁷¹ Talbot-Rice (1952: 168, illus. 35b) is not specific when mentioning sculptural comparanda, but a few possible examples might include the Bradford-on-Avon angels.

⁴⁷² Beckwith, 1972: 38, 41, cat. 15, illus. 36; Wormald, 1952: 79, no. 56, pl. 26-28.

⁴⁷³ Goldschmidt’s catalogue entry on the Heribert Tau-cross provides no stylistic analysis; Beckwith (1972: 124, no. 30) cites Goldschmidt, 1926: IV, 11, fig. 10a-c, pl. III, but does not elaborate. Goldschmidt did not discuss, or even include, the John of Beverly crozier; Longhurst (1926: 76) mentions it in passing but does not comment on its features.

⁴⁷⁴ Beckwith, 1972: 52, cat. 31, fig. 67.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.: 52, cat. 32, 33, 34, figs 68, 69, 71.

⁴⁷⁶ Beckwith, 1972: 52, cat. 35, fig. 70. Beckwith also links the style of this pectoral with a small stone crucifixion at Wormington (ninth- or early eleventh-century) now held at St Katherine’s Church, Gloucester.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.: 52, cat. 38, fig. 72.

⁴⁷⁸ Beckwith, 1972: 52, cat. 36, fig. 73.

inscriptions and iconography) the crosier depicted a hagiographic event and an (arguably) biblical scene of the Harrowing of Hell.⁴⁷⁹ Beckwith includes a long discussion on John of Beverley, Bishop of Hexham (686-705), but does no more than mention the leaf scrolls of the crosier as being similar to the Pectoral with Christ and the Lamb of God (cat. 31, Fig. 4.32; hereafter the Pectoral), with its apparent “connections with York around the mid-eleventh century.”⁴⁸⁰

Overall, the scholarship on both pieces lacks detailed stylistic analysis,⁴⁸¹ although several observations could be made, particularly with the zoomorphic interlace and figural style. The Heribert Tau-cross, for instance, despite centuries of damage that has eroded much of the carved detail, still presents a number of stylistic characteristics that link it to other artistic creations of later Anglo-Saxon England. The volute ending, articulated as snarling beasts are found in a number of ivory objects, namely, the Alcester Tau-Cross, the mid eleventh-century pen-case from the British Museum (cat. 57), the late eleventh-century dragon’s head sceptre tip from Winchester Cathedral Library (Fig. 4.33), and the *Agnus Dei* Tau-cross. The figural style of the Crucifixion and the *Majestas* can likewise be linked to tenth- and eleventh-century art. The rigid linear body of the crucified Christ, the agitated drapery of the loincloth, and the robes worn by the Virgin and John are all features shared by other Anglo-Saxon ivories, such as the figure of the Crucified Christ reliquary cross, c.1000 (cat. 34); the two walrus ivory figures of John and the Virgin from a Crucifixion group of c.1000 (cat. 30); the Crucifixion group on the Alcester Tau-Cross; and the nearly identical ivory plaques at the British Museum (cat. 43 & 44).

These characteristics are also featured in several late Anglo-Saxon manuscript images: the Crucifixion drawing in the late tenth-century Ramsey Psalter, with its emphasis on agitated drapery, stiff figural lines and the simple outline of the cross itself (Fig. 4.34A); the similarly articulated Crucifixions in the c.992-995 Sherborne Pontifical (Fig. 4.34B); and the Arundel Psalter Crucifixion image (Fig. 4.35). There are also a number of late Anglo-Saxon stone crucifixions that feature a stiff, frontal linearity: those at Romsey Abbey, Southampton (Fig. 4.36A), Stepney St Dunstan, London (Fig. 4.36B), the two crucifixions at Langford, Oxfordshire (Fig. 4.37A,B), and three crucifixions in

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.: 58, cat. 44, fig. 88-9.

⁴⁸⁰ Beckwith, 1972: 58.

⁴⁸¹ Beckwith (1972: 127, no. 44) relates the ideas of Wormald and Hunt but does not elaborate, or add his own opinion.

Breamore and Headbourne Worthy, Hampshire, and Nassington, Northamptonshire (Fig. 4.38A-C).⁴⁸²

Similarly, the style of the angels on the reverse of the Heribert Tau-cross, with their fluttering hem lines and outstretched arms all have stylistic parallels with the art produced in Anglo-Saxon England in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The four angels surrounding and supporting the mandorlas holding Christ are a common iconographic feature of Anglo-Saxon manuscript illumination, stone sculpture and ivory carving, but the figures of the Heribert Tau-cross can be compared stylistically with the angels of the dedication page of New Minster Charter (Fig. 4.24A), the angels surrounding the mandorla with Christ in the Aelfric Pentateuch (Fig. 4.39), the stone angels of Bradford-on-Avon (Fig. 4.24C),⁴⁸³ the stone angel of Winterbourne Steepleton (Fig. 4.40A),⁴⁸⁴ the angels lifting the cross within the Resurrection with Mary and St Peter panel held in the Cambridge (cat. 24, Fig. 4.40B), the angels surrounding the mandorla of the Quatrefoil Virgin and Child ivory in the Ashmolean (cat. 28, Fig. 4.26B), and the angels surrounding the *Majestas Domini* now held in St Petersburg (cat. 23, Fig. 4.41). The confronting pose of the figure of Christ within the mandorla with his book and hand upraised in benediction also have stylistic parallels in Anglo-Saxon England: in the Æthelstan Psalter (Fig. 4.42A); in the New Minster *Libre Vitae* (Fig. 4.42B); in the image of Christ enthroned in the Grimbold Gospels (Fig. 4.43A); in the eleventh-century historiated initial in the Benedictional of Aethelwold (Fig. 4.43B); in two Christ in Majesty images illustrated in Trinity College Cambridge manuscripts between c.1020-30 (Fig. 4.44A,B); as well as the mid eleventh-century Christ in Majesty stone carving at Barnack in Cambridgeshire (Fig. 4.44C).⁴⁸⁵

Likewise, few scholars have focused in detail on the stylistic features of the Beverley Crosier, and while Beckwith mentioned the leaf scroll as being similar to that found on the Pectoral (cat. 31, Fig. 4.32), the comparison is not entirely convincing. Zarnecki also cited the early twelfth-century Gloucester candlestick and the cloister

⁴⁸² For Romsey, see: CASSS vol. VII; Stepney, see: CASSS vol. IV; Langford, see: CASSS vol. VII; Breamore, see: CASSS vol. IV; Headbourne Worthy, see: CASSS vol. IV; Nassington, see: CASSS V.

⁴⁸³ Cramp, 2006: 203, ills. 404-06.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid, 2006: 125, ills. 149-52.

⁴⁸⁵ Cramp, 1992: 92; see also, CASSS vol. VII.

capitals at Norwich as possible comparanda (Fig. 4.45A,B),⁴⁸⁶ but in both cases the vine scroll presents a more convoluted geometric aspect compared with the robust, relatively naturalistic presentation seen on the crosier. Upon closer examination, the inhabited vine scroll on the Crosier has more similarities with that on an Anglo-Norman ivory Tau-Cross head in the V&A (Fig. 4.46), another in the British Museum (cat. 55, Fig. 2.10), and the Pierced Zoomorphic panel at the Musée de Cluny (cat. 56, Fig. 3.15B) in terms of the relationship between the scroll and the creatures inhabiting it. While such examples might suggest that the Beverley crosier might lie beyond the boundaries of this study, it should be added that manuscripts of the second half of the tenth to mid eleventh century from Canterbury, such as Bede's *Lives of St Cuthbert* (Fig. 4.47A), the Bosworth Psalter (Fig. 4.47B), and the Ramsey Psalter (Fig. 4.48), all feature the distinctive flowering leaf ends found on the Crosier. This implies that while this ivory might be one of the latest of the ivories considered here, it can still be considered as having emerged from a (late) Anglo-Saxon milieu, and perhaps provides evidence of a continuum of style from the earlier eleventh century (in manuscript decoration) through to the intermediate period (in the early Anglo-Norman ivories).⁴⁸⁷

4.2c Summary

From this consideration of the style of a group of ivories generally accepted as being “Anglo-Saxon”, it is clear that the idea of style as being a deployment of constants that visually does not change over the course of the production of a group of objects, is at best unrealistic. In fact, considering the uncontested ivories, especially those that have attracted less attention over the years, in this way has demonstrated that a wide range of styles were used across the Anglo-Saxon period in a relatively small geographic area. This of course, is perhaps unsurprising given that “Anglo-Saxon England” was a place of constantly changing social and cultural practices, often sharing, adopting and appropriating from their neighbours; in this way the varying stylistic characteristics seen in the uncontested ivories are perhaps best considered as being in keeping with the fluid social norms and the changing artistic expressions of the period.

⁴⁸⁶ Zarnecki et al, 1984: cat. 189. For more see: Franklin, 1980: 5-21; Atherton, 1996.

⁴⁸⁷ For more on the transition between Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman art, see e.g.: Dodwell, 1982: 216-34; Karkov, 2011: 247-92.

4.3 The Contested Ivories

Alongside these ivories, which have perhaps come to define what an Anglo-Saxon ivory might be, is another group that displays a number of styles stemming from various sources which is continually challenged as to its “Anglo-Saxon-ness”. The scholarship on these contested ivories and the comparable continental material invoked to support the claims made about them will here be considered in some detail to determine the basis on which they might, or might not, be assigned to continental contexts. The purpose of this is to open up the relatively closed discussion of these ivories to consider possible (alternative) Anglo-Saxon provenances.

Indeed, with these ivories the question of style is exponentially more problematic as they display a wide range of stylistic characteristics, providing no clear indication of their likely origins, whether in Anglo-Saxon England or early medieval Europe. The reality of the cross-Channel traffic of political, religious and artistic ideas, trends and individuals in the Anglo-Saxon period has been well established,⁴⁸⁸ and understanding of this has underpinned much of the scholarly discussion of the style of the Anglo-Saxon ivories, being invoked however to argue almost exclusively that many of the pieces were of continental rather than Anglo-Saxon origin. These premises will be reconsidered by focusing on the more well-known contested pieces, examining them in the light of other examples of art clearly identified as Anglo-Saxon, something that has hitherto been largely ignored by the scholarship, in order to assess the extent of the continental nature of their style. This will, in fact, demonstrate that the ‘continental’ characteristics commonly deemed to be exhibited by the ivories, were also features that were circulating widely in Anglo-Saxon art, suggesting at the very least that a continental provenance for the ivories need not necessarily be the case, and those features which have commonly caused confusion (or a track record of avoidance) in the past, are here shown as distinctly Anglo-Saxon motifs, specific to this time and place.

4.3a Continental ‘Influences’ and the Scholarly Response

There are ten ivories that have been most generally contested in the scholarship over the last 150 years: the Genoels-Elderen diptych (cat. 5, Fig. 2.12); the Last Judgement/

⁴⁸⁸ See Ch. 3.

Transfiguration panel (cat. 7/13, Fig. 3.11A,B); the Zoomorphic/Ascension panel (cat. 8/14, Fig. 3.12A,B); the Virgin-Apostles (cat. 10, Fig. 4.58); the Baptism and Ascension/Entry into Jerusalem ivory (cat. 11/15, Fig. 3.13A,B; hereafter the Baptism-Ascension and Entry ivories respectively); the *Majestas* panel (cat. 9, Fig. 4.49); the Life of Christ diptych (cat. 12, Fig. 3.9; hereafter the LoC diptych); the *Traditio Legis* and Enthroned Virgin (cat. 26, 27, Fig. 3.14A,B); and the Pectoral (cat. 30, Fig. 4.37). All told, these ten pieces present seventeen iconographic schemes, some of which are repeated, and others present re-carvings and are thus recognised as crossing stylistic boundaries even in the studies that dispute their dates and provenance.

The Genoels-Elderen Diptych

The first of these ivories, the Genoels-Elderen diptych (Fig. 2.12) has elicited varying accounts due largely to the unique nature of its stylistic features but its provenance has been considered primarily on palaeographic and iconographic grounds, rather than its stylistic features. As a result it has been placed either in Anglo-Saxon England before the end of the eighth century,⁴⁸⁹ or in early Carolingian Francia, c.751-840,⁴⁹⁰ while Neuman de Vegvar has placed it in pre-Carolingian Bavaria in the late eighth century.⁴⁹¹

Epigraphically, Bischoff identified the inscriptions as purely Northumbrian,⁴⁹² but, as Neuman de Vegvar noted, his work on German and Austrian scriptoria demonstrated the presence of several Insular scribes working in such centres.⁴⁹³ Goldschmidt attributed it to his late eighth-century Ada group of the early Carolingian period,⁴⁹⁴ based on his perception of the Triumphant Christ as similar to figures on the covers of the c.778-820 Lorsch gospels (Fig. 4.50),⁴⁹⁵ or the Godescalc Evangelistary written at Aachen between 781 and 783 (Fig. 4.51). Indeed (stylistically) the “expressive linearism”⁴⁹⁶ of the piece, notable in the low-relief nature of the carving and the almost ‘etched’ details of the figures, led Braunfels to suggest that the “diptych” might be the lost original binding of the

⁴⁸⁹ Volbach, 1952: 94, cat. 217; Beckwith, 1972: 118, cat. 3.

⁴⁹⁰ Goldschmidt, 1914: I, 8, figs 1 & 2, pls I & II; Volbach, 1952: 94; Neuman de Vegvar, 1990: 15.

⁴⁹¹ Neuman de Vegvar, 1990: 8-24.

⁴⁹² Bischoff, 1990: 117; Neuman de Vegvar, 1990: 9.

⁴⁹³ Bischoff, 1967: 306-7; Neuman de Vegvar, 1990: 9.

⁴⁹⁴ Goldschmidt, 1914: I, 8, figs 1-2, pls I-II; Neuman de Vegvar, 1990: 12.

⁴⁹⁵ Neuman de Vegvar, 1990: 12.

⁴⁹⁶ Neuman de Vegvar, 1990: 12.

Evangelistary.⁴⁹⁷ This very linearism, however, led Volbach to attribute the ivory to a Frankish Merovingian provenance,⁴⁹⁸ and it has also been cited in support of an Anglo-Saxon origin,⁴⁹⁹ while the iconography of Christ Triumphant has been shown to have had a presence in the eighth-century art of Anglo-Saxon England, as on the crosses at Ruthwell, Dumfriesshire (Fig. 4.52A) and Bewcastle, Cumbria (Fig. 4.52B).⁵⁰⁰ Likewise, the marginal motifs have been deemed to betray similarities with Anglo-Saxon work, such as that found in the decorative panel of the eighth-century Aberlady Cross (Fig. 4.53).

Neuman de Vegvar, engaging with these arguments in a comprehensive stylistic analysis, has suggested that its origins lie rather in south-east Germany or western Austria, specifically the late eighth-century Duchy of Bavaria, citing parallels with the Montpellier Psalter (Fig. 4.54), the Cutbercht Gospels (Fig. 4.8A) and the Tassilo Chalice (Fig. 4.55).⁵⁰¹ While exhaustively comparing the artwork of each of these with the Genoels-Elderen diptych, Neuman de Vegvar explains that the

Italianate inscriptive, iconographic and stylistic elements in the strongly non-classical stylistic context of the Genoels-Elderen ivories suggests that their origin point was a region with access to Italian models but without a strongly emulative stylistic bias toward Italian art.⁵⁰²

Currently, therefore, the stylistic scholarship on the diptych stands at a cross-roads, with Webster recently describing the pieces as being:

cannibalized from a late Antique ivory diptych; the use of several separate plates in their construction suggests that the precious material was eked out, and is a testimony to its scarcity in the eighth century.⁵⁰³

She goes on to state that the diptych could not have been made in England during this period as whalebone and antler were the materials being used in that region at the time (contrary to the evidence provided here),⁵⁰⁴ but does acknowledge that the diptych displays a number of features shared with Northumbrian exemplars, observing that:

⁴⁹⁷ Braunfels, 1965-68: vol. III, 198, cat. 1474.

⁴⁹⁸ Volbach, 1922: 217.

⁴⁹⁹ Budny, 1984: 118-19; Jewell, 1986: 103; Bailey, 1978: 3-28; Alexander, 1978: 46

⁵⁰⁰ For both crosses, see CASSS vol. II.

⁵⁰¹ Webster & Backhouse, 1991: 168, cat. 131; see further Neuman de Vegvar, 1990: 16.

⁵⁰² Neuman de Vegvar, 1990: 20.

⁵⁰³ Webster, 2012: 167.

⁵⁰⁴ See Chapter 3.

stylistically, the lettering of the accompanying inscriptions, the elongated faces, the linear zig-zags and flattened folds of the draperies, and the interlace and key-patterning of the borders all point to Northumbrian exemplars, themselves drawing on earlier north Italian iconographic sources”.⁵⁰⁵

This, at the very least implies contact with Anglo-Saxon Northumbria among those responsible for the production of the piece.

The Last Judgement and Zoomorphic Panels

Most commonly considered together are the Last Judgement ivory and the Zoomorphic panel, both housed in the V&A. Goldschmidt initially proposed Tours as the possible place of origin of the Last Judgement panel (Fig. 3.11A), based on a perceived likeness to contemporary manuscripts of the Tours school;⁵⁰⁶ Brøndsted agreed, although suggested that the Zoomorphic panel (Fig. 3.12A) was an example “of the influence of the North of England on the School of Tours”,⁵⁰⁷ while Beckwith deemed it and the Zoomorphic panel to be Anglo-Saxon, connecting the Last Judgement and Zoomorphic ivories to the Virgin-Apostles panel on the basis of stylistic traditions understood to be common well into the tenth century in Anglo-Saxon England: namely, the type of zoomorphic interlace, pellet framework, and a figural style characterised by finely-hatched short straight hair, neat and short eyes and mouth, the chevron treatment of triangular wings,⁵⁰⁸ and what he considered a figural surplus in each composition.⁵⁰⁹

Williamson, however, basing his conclusions on what he deemed to be Wright’s “convincing” attribution of the Virgin-Apostles panel to southern Germany or northern Italy,⁵¹⁰ concluded that both the Last Judgement and Zoomorphic ivories were produced in continental workshops under the influence of “Insular and Italian models, and with access to earlier ivory carvings”; this would appear to rule out Anglo-Saxon England as a

⁵⁰⁵ Webster, 2012: 167.

⁵⁰⁶ Goldschmidt, 1914: I, cat. 69; Longhurst, 1927: 65.

⁵⁰⁷ Brøndsted, 1924: 90-1, figs 76, 77.

⁵⁰⁸ Ironically, the chevron treatment of the wings is only found in one other stylistic tradition, that of Byzantium, and does not seem to have been picked up in the art of the Carolingian/Ottonian courts. See Cutler, 1998, 2009c for more.

⁵⁰⁹ Beckwith, 1972: 25, cat. 9, fig. 24.

⁵¹⁰ Wright, 1985: 10-11; Williamson, 2010: 153.

possible point of origin.⁵¹¹ Nevertheless, while Williamson deemed the ivories to have emerged from a South German or North Italian centre working under Insular influence, he did acknowledge that the “highly distinctive herring-bone leaf forms and bifurcations of the foliate shoots and the interlace ribbons” of the Zoomorphic panel were comparable to motifs found on Anglo-Saxon stonework, like the c.800 Easby Cross (Fig. 4.56) coincidentally displayed in the V&A.⁵¹² Overall therefore, the Last Judgement and Zoomorphic ivory panels have been identified as (early) Carolingian works of c.800, emerging from the Court School at Tours, or further south in the Carolingian empire in c.800 – both attributions made on the basis of associations with the Virgin-Apostles panel – and as having been produced somewhere in Anglo-Saxon England in the eighth century.

The Virgin-Apostles, Baptism-Ascension, Majestas and Life of Christ Diptych

Another group of ivories that are usually considered together are the *Majestas* panel (cat. 9; Fig. 4.49), the Virgin-Apostles (cat. 10; Fig. 3.8), the Baptism-Ascension panel (cat. 11; Fig. 3.13), and the Life of Christ diptych (cat. 12; Fig. 3.9). The grouping is made on the basis of numerous shared stylistic characteristics: namely, pellet halos (and some evidence of pellet framework before being cut down); facial/ figural style; and objects (such as crosses, baptismal fonts, background devices) that are seen as almost identical in all the panels. Goldschmidt originally grouped the first three together, suggesting that they were Merovingian copies,⁵¹³ but Longhurst disagreed citing a Coptic or Syrian origin as more probable, and linking them to two carved reliefs in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Fig. 4.57A,B),⁵¹⁴ or the frescoes at Bawit Monastery in Egypt (Fig. 4.57C).⁵¹⁵ Beckwith, while not firmly disagreeing, identified several points within each of the four panels that link them stylistically to the artistic productions of Anglo-Saxon England:⁵¹⁶ the hollow pellet border found in the Baptism and Ascension he considered similar to that of the Last Judgement panel (in both its border and the framing of the architecture over the righteous

⁵¹¹ Goldschmidt, 1914: I. cat. 178, pl. LXXXII; Beckwith, 1972: 22-25, cat. 4, figs 1, 16; Williamson, 2010: 152-53, cat. 36.

⁵¹² Williamson, 2010: 154, cat. no. 37.

⁵¹³ Goldschmidt 1914: I, 183, 184, 185, 186.

⁵¹⁴ Longhurst, 1927: 34; see also Breck, 1919a: 242-3. For other panels that are Carolingian with re-carved Coptic versos, see Breck, 1919b: 394-400.

⁵¹⁵ Longhurst, 1927: 34; see also Clédat, 1902: 541; 1904: 522; Maspéro, 1913: 287.

⁵¹⁶ Beckwith, 1972: 24-25.

souls in the bottom left corner); the crowding of figures, articulated as busts with large eyes in the upper Ascension scene he saw as a characteristic of medieval English sculpture generally,⁵¹⁷ but traced it back to Romano-British sculpture like that at Gloucester.⁵¹⁸ The group in its entirety he suggested was comparable to the late antique influenced images of the Mediterranean, seen in the early eighth-century Codex Amiatinus (Fig. 4.58), the Codex Aureus (Fig. 4.7A) and the Vespasian Psalter (Fig. 4.6).

Supporting Beckwith's comparisons, Michelli noted that the early group (the Last Judgement, Zoomorphic, Baptism-Ascension, *Majestas* and Virgin-Apostles panels, and LoC diptych) display a significant number of shared features: the Last Judgment ivory and Baptism-Ascension panels both utilise an open twist in the frame created by drilling neat holes at the centres and edges of the panel; the *Majestas* replicates the use of drilled pellet decoration (borders and halos) found in the Last Judgement, Baptism-Ascension and LoC diptych; the treatment of the faces in the Baptism-Ascension panel and the *Majestas* ivory can be compared with those in the Angel waking the dead at the Last Judgement and Virgin-Apostles, with the use of short, straight hatched hair and etched facial details; and the clear repetition of etched lines and punched dots decorate the mandorlas of both the seated Christ figures (in the Baptism-Ascension diptych, and the *Majestas* panel), as well as the tub in the Baptism-Ascension diptych, the robe of the Virgin in the Virgin-Apostles panel, and the mandorla of the LoC diptych.⁵¹⁹ Williamson however, places the Baptism-Ascension, *Majestas* and LoC diptych in either Alto Adige or a "monastic foundation in the South Triol",⁵²⁰ due to their "idiosyncratic style...and the availability of Late Roman diptychs for reuse in a Christian context".⁵²¹ He failed to provide any close comparisons to substantiate this claim.

Further complicating many of these scholarly attributions is the fact that several panels were re-carved on their reverse at a later date: the Last Judgement had the Transfiguration (cat. 13; Fig. 3.11B) carved on its reverse; the Ascension (cat. 14; Fig. 3.12B) was carved on the back of the Zoomorphic panel, and the Entry ivory (cat. 15; Fig.

⁵¹⁷ Likely thinking of the Easby cross, the Rothbury cross, or the carved slab at Wirksworth among others. For more discussion on these stone carvings and their relation to this study, see Chapter 5.

⁵¹⁸ Kendrick, 1938: pl. IV; Jacobsthal, 1944: cat. 73; Beckwith, 1972: 24, n. 25.

⁵¹⁹ Beckwith, 1972: cat. nos. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 21, 22, 23, 24; Michelli, 2003: 106, notes 10 & 11.

⁵²⁰ Williamson, 2010: 149 -50, no. 35, fig. 2.

⁵²¹ Ibid, 2010: 150.

3.13B) was carved onto the reverse of the Baptism-Ascension ivory; these (re)carvings are deemed to display different stylistic traditions, possibly completely removed from Anglo-Saxon England.⁵²² Goldschmidt identified the Transfiguration and Ascension as later examples of his “Reimsian Liuthard” group, belonging to the late-ninth or early tenth centuries, on the basis of their close stylistic links (slim, energetic figures and precisely similar borders) with several ninth century reliefs covering a gospel book and a psalter held in Paris, all of which were in turn influenced by the art style featured in the c.800 Utrecht Psalter (Fig. 4.59).⁵²³ Beckwith, however, identified all the panels as “Anglo-Saxon”, dating the Transfiguration and Ascension to the late tenth century, and although he compared them with the Last Judgment, Zoomorphic and Virgin-Apostle panels, he did consider them to present a distinct stylistic convention that demanded they be placed in a group of their own. This he considered to be distinguished by the variety of styles displayed which stemmed from several sources: “the late tenth- and early eleventh-century copies of Reims manuscripts made in England”,⁵²⁴ and manuscript work being done at that time in Ramsey and Canterbury.⁵²⁵ The shared characteristics he identified included the low relief carving and drapery folds in the Ascension panel, seen also in the mid eleventh-century Bristol Harrowing of Hell stone relief (Fig. 4.60).⁵²⁶

Disagreeing with Beckwith’s view of the ivories as Anglo-Saxon, although not necessarily as emerging from closely dated phases of sculptural activity, Wright, Williamson and Webster generally consider the re-carved group of ivories (the Transfiguration, Ascension and Entry panels) as having emerged from continental centres working “in the Insular Style”.⁵²⁷ This means, in effect, that the Last Judgment, Zoomorphic and Baptism and Ascension panels have been connected to ninth-century Carolingian artistic centres because the scenes carved on their reverse are considered to have emerged from such workshops,⁵²⁸ and Williamson suggests (without providing supporting evidence) that within this continental workshop, the original and subsequent re-

⁵²² Ibid, 2010: 191, cat. 46; 197, cat. 48.

⁵²³ Goldschmidt (1914: I, nos 71a, 71b, pl. XXVII) also considered the *Traditio Legis* and Enthroned Virgin in this group; Longhurst, 1927: 64; Michelli, 2003: 103, 106.

⁵²⁴ Beckwith, 1972: 43.

⁵²⁵ Ibid.: 46.

⁵²⁶ Ibid.: 47; Cramp, 2006: 145, illus. 198.

⁵²⁷ Wright, 1985: 10-11; Webster & Backhouse, 1991: 179, cat. 140 (Zoomorphic panel only); Williamson, 2010: 154.

⁵²⁸ Williamson, 2010: 152, cat. 36; 154, cat. 37.

carvings could not have been separated by more than 50 years.⁵²⁹ Certainly the Transfiguration and Ascension can be considered to have much in common with both Carolingian and Ottonian carvings, such as the Liuthard group of ivories and several ivory book covers. The central apostle of the Transfiguration and the figure of Christ in the Ascension, for instance, can both be compared with the Nathan figure on the cover of the c.842-69 Psalter of Charles the Bald with its flowing drapery, upturned face, arching back and outstretched hands (Fig. 4.61A). Similarly, the horizontal, swirling “cloud” structures that both separate the levels of each scene and give the figures something to stand on, in both the Transfiguration and Ascension (and to a smaller extent in the Entry into Jerusalem), can be considered as attempts to reproduce the horizontal ground/cloud representations on the cover of the Prayer book of Charles the Bald (Fig. 4.61B). Likewise, the figural style of the Reims ivories, such as the British Museum’s c.860-70 Marriage at Cana panel (Fig. 4.62) characterised by squat figures with swollen stomachs and outwardly splayed hands, is shared by the figures in the ivories with which the Ascension and Transfiguration are generally associated.

Michelli, however, argued not only for a re-dating of this entire group, including the ‘early’ versos, but also suggested reconsidering their provenance, based on stylistic features and comparable Anglo-Saxon manuscript illumination datable to the eleventh century. From her analysis, she considered it “easy” to assign the Last Judgement, Zoomorphic and Virgin-Apostles panel to a centre such as Winchester, based on their shared characteristics, and the perceived similarity between the attitude of the “dancing Angel” in the Last Judgement with the figures in the c.1031 New Minster *Liber Vitae* (Fig. 4.42B).⁵³⁰ Building upon this assumption, and the exchange of religious personnel between Winchester and Canterbury that is known to have occurred in the eleventh century, she suggested that the three panels were transferred to Canterbury around the same time that the Utrecht Psalter was being copied there.⁵³¹

⁵²⁹ Ibid.: 154. “These plaques must have been removed from the book-cover within fifty years and were re-employed as doors in the third quarter of the ninth century.” He suggests that the reverse (the Transfiguration and Ascension), were re-made as doors and that the previous carvings (Last Judgement and Zoomorphic), were two panels that were just brought together, cut down to similar sizes, and re-carved.

⁵³⁰ Michelli, 2003: 111; see further Holländer, 1974: 184, fig. 151.

⁵³¹ Michelli, 2003: 111; on the Harley Psalter, see further Noel et al., 1996.

The Traditio Legis, Enthroned Virgin, and Pectoral

The final three ivories under consideration here: the late tenth- to early eleventh-century *Traditio Legis cum Clavis* (cat. 26, Fig. 3.14A; hereafter as *Traditio Legis*), the Enthroned Virgin (cat. 27, Fig. 3.14B) and the Pectoral (cat. 30, Fig. 4.32), have elicited varying opinions, but few publications overall, on their provenance and stylistic features. While Goldschmidt considered the *Traditio Legis* and Enthroned Virgin to be connected to the Transfiguration and Ascension panels (Fig. 3.11B & 3.12B) as part of his “Reimsian Liuthard” group (c. late ninth or early tenth century), Beckwith argued for an Anglo-Saxon provenance, comparing them with the Benedictional of Æthelwold, dated to c. 1000 (Fig. 5.32).

Ironically, the Pectoral has not been so much contested as vaguely questioned, and the few publications that do consider it, present more in-depth analyses than any commentary on the *Traditio Legis* and Enthroned Virgin combined. According to the Metropolitan Museum website, it can be dated to 1000-1050 and is deemed to be “British or Northern French”, with the suggestion that it was made near Saint-Omer; but it is also acknowledged that it has characteristics similar to “both Anglo-Saxon drawings and illuminated manuscripts”.⁵³² The most recent publication was that by Randall in 1962,⁵³³ and while he certainly put forward a strong case for an English provenance, it is useful here to briefly mention the means by which he reached this conclusion, if only to highlight how the ivory has been treated, and how (as with many of the contested ivories) no single feature of the carving is deemed to give it an “Anglo-Saxon” origin; rather it is the sum of its parts that leads to a conclusion.

The “British or Northern French” provenance was originally suggested by Goldschmidt, likely to cover the many problems of date and provenance;⁵³⁴ he narrowed the date range to c. 1000-1050, but as the monasteries of St Bertin (Saint-Omer, France) and St Vaast (Arras, France) were closely connected to monasteries in England at this time, with the Winchester style dominating scriptoria in southern England, and as gifts of manuscripts were shared in both directions, where copies were being made and re-exchanged, it is not altogether difficult to understand why Goldschmidt (and subsequent

⁵³² Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Website: Pectoral with Christ and the Lamb of God and the Symbols of the Four Evangelists, 17.190.217.

⁵³³ Randall, 1962: 159-171.

⁵³⁴ Goldschmidt, 1923: IV, 1a, b, pl. 1; see also: Baum, 1933, II: 226; Casson, 1935: 326.

authors) chose to leave the question of provenance open. Against this background, Randall noted many stylistic characteristics that situate the ivory in an Anglo-Saxon context. Separating the discussion between recto and verso, he began with the ‘Pantocrator’ image on the front of the ivory (Fig. 4.32): the slight turn of the head of Christ (instead of a frontal view) he concluded to be unlike the St Bertin Elders ivories (Fig. 4.63A,B) and continental sculpture in general;⁵³⁵ the drapery he saw as being in line with the Winchester style (although not as well executed as the Virgin and St John figures from Saint-Omer (cat. 29, Fig. 4.64); he identified the scarf across the knees of Christ as a stylistic tool used to “mask the recession in space between knees and body” that was “found frequently in English sculpture and manuscript illumination and seldom on the continent”; and the sleeve-ends of Christ’s garment that flutter in the air on either side, he considered characteristically English.⁵³⁶ Finally, Randall made the point that the proportions of Christ’s body are of a type regularly found in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts from the end of the tenth to the early eleventh centuries: namely, in the *c.*950 Anhalt-Morgan gospels (Fig. 4.65),⁵³⁷ and the figure of St Benedict in the Arundel Psalter (Fig. 4.66).⁵³⁸ All of this he demonstrated is in direct contrast to the usual body type seen in northern French manuscripts, where the figures are heavier and broader, with the legs seeming to flow into the body, whereas the tendency in Anglo-Saxon art was to give the lower body its own defined area, eventually being stylised into a heart shape, seen best in a Christ Church Canterbury manuscript of *c.*1073 (Fig. 4.67) which he thought could have been inspired by the earlier Pectoral.⁵³⁹

The verso of the Pectoral displays the Lamb with the Eagle of St John and the Ox of St Luke (Fig. 4.32), set in a quatrefoil intersected by a square and subdivided again by a geometric figure. The diamond frame and foliage give a sense of symmetry, but upon closer inspection it becomes apparent that they are organised according to controlled asymmetry, a characteristic of Anglo-Saxon art of this period, which Randall explained was a stylistic trait providing invaluable insight into the overall ivory as “control of this

⁵³⁵ Goldschmidt, 1923: IV, no. 36-39; Randall, 1962: 165-6.

⁵³⁶ Randall, 1962: 165-66.

⁵³⁷ See also Swarzenski, 1949: figs. 4-7.

⁵³⁸ Here Randall (1962: 166) focussed on St Benedict’s elongated features and a “headband that exaggerates the height of his skull”, which he considered similar to that of the Pectoral Christ.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*: 166.

seemingly casual element in design is seldom found when a copyist tries to translate a style which is not his own".⁵⁴⁰ Turning to other features of the verso, Randall cited more Anglo-Saxon examples and comparanda: he linked the foliage with the Crucifixion plaque at Romsey Abbey (Fig. 4.36A); the Eagle of St John, he saw as similar to John's eagle in the Grimbold Gospels (Fig. 4.43A).⁵⁴¹ In closing, he acknowledged the problem of stylistic similarities between the Pectoral and the St Bertin manuscripts (specifically the Boulogne-ser-Mer MS 11, Fig. 4.68), but explained that the sum of its features points strongly to a place of origin which was close to the heart of artistic activity in Anglo-Saxon England in the first half of the eleventh century, with the most likely centres being Winchester, Canterbury or London.⁵⁴²

Overall therefore, the scholarship on the contested ivories makes it clear that they have inspired considerable discussion and contention concerning their stylistic origins. These are not to be taken lightly, for the stylistic material invoked to substantiate one contested "continental" ivory produced "in the Insular style", can be matched by stylistic material presented to support Anglo-Saxon origins. Generally speaking therefore, it might be reasonable to conclude that the contested ivories display signs of continental manufacture. However, and bearing in mind developments in Anglo-Saxon England at centres such as Canterbury, Jarrow and Wearmouth in the seventh and eighth centuries, Canterbury and York in the ninth century, and Winchester and Canterbury during the tenth to eleventh centuries, other explanations might be considered. At this juncture, therefore, a more detailed consideration of potential Anglo-Saxon provenances for these contested pieces needs to be undertaken, the aim being to highlight the risks involved of declaring one over the other, as this can (and has in the past) denied the possibility of shared points of stylistic inspiration that early medieval artists would have had access to, regardless of their ethnicity or their place of work. It is now well established, for instance, that Anglo-Saxon painters and carvers of the eighth and ninth centuries had access to the art of late antiquity and the early Christian worlds of Rome and the eastern Mediterranean in ways

⁵⁴⁰ Randall, 1962: 168.

⁵⁴¹ For both these manuscript citations; see further, Cockerell, 1908: pl. 18a.

⁵⁴² Randall, 1962: 169.

comparable to their Carolingian counterparts, and that they chose to reflect such sources of artistic inspiration in their own work.⁵⁴³

4.3b Reassessing Anglo-Saxon Stylistic Traditions

With this in mind it is worth turning to consider the contested ivories in light of potential “Anglo-Saxon” stylistic qualities, but the extremely broad range of such features means that here it will be advisable to focus on the several shared stylistic features that have been highlighted in the scholarship to date: namely, framing; zoomorphic interlace; and a stiffness or linearity in figural composition which is deemed to be distinct from the later art of the tenth- and eleventh-century “Winchester style”, otherwise characterised by “agitated gestures” and flowing (wind-swept) drapery. This is not to deny that these elements occur in continental art (which as will be seen, occurs significantly less than in Anglo-Saxon England), but rather that consideration of these specific motifs, taken in conjunction with each other, and compared with their presence in uncontested pieces of Anglo-Saxon decorated metalwork, stone carving, manuscript painting and carved ivory, provides a more useful understanding of the potential Anglo-Saxon nature of their contested stylistic characteristics.

In fact, a brief examination of continental ivory material that coincides with the contested ivories reveals a certain disregard for framing, zoomorphic interlace and linear figural carving. They are not absent from the continental material, but they are not as abundant as they are in the arts of Anglo-Saxon and the wider Insular world. While most continental ivories have a plain or stylised acanthus border, and some include interlace that includes flora and fauna, they do not involve zoomorphic interlace, nor do they show stiff confronting figures. Thus, the gospel covers depicting Christ Treading the Beasts of *c.*800 (Fig. 4.69A), the early ninth-century New Testament ivory at the British Museum (Fig. 4.69B), and the ninth- or tenth-century Christ in Majesty in Berlin (Fig. 4.70) are among the few continental pieces that show some pellet framework. Likewise, the mid ninth-century book cover from Metz (Fig. 4.71A) and the *c.*900 one from St Gall (Fig. 4.71B) offer rare examples of interlace with flora and fauna, but do not include zoomorphic interlace. Similarly, the stiff figural style is seen in the portrait of Luke in the Gospel Book

⁵⁴³ See e.g.: Webster & Backhouse, 1991; Hawkes, 1993, 2003a,b, 2007b; Karkov & Brown, 2003; Webster, 2012a.

of Otto III, c.1000 (Fig. 4.73A) and the equally late Crucifixion in the Sacramentary of Henri II, dated to 1002-14 (Fig. 4.73B).

While such examples can be invoked, it remains the case that no medium, object type or subject matter includes these three specific stylistic characteristics with as much consistency as the uncontested and contested ivories under consideration here. Unlike the continental material, these motifs are widespread across the various media produced in Anglo-Saxon England, and were, moreover, worked continuously *throughout* the period in metalwork, ivory, stone sculpture and manuscript illumination.

The long *durée* of this currency, along with the rarity of use of framing, zoomorphic interlace and a stiff figural style, in continental material, suggests at the very least that the motifs might be deemed Anglo-Saxon in some distinctive way, while leaving open the possibility that they were used by Insular artists working on the Continent who were capable of fusing artistic styles and techniques encountered on both sides of the Channel.

4.3b(i) The Late Eighth to Early Ninth Century

Framework

The first group of contested ivories provide a spectrum of stylistic anomalies that underscore why and how so much discussion has been devoted to considering their provenance. This being said, they all feature borders (made up in a variety of ways, with many including pellets, zoomorphic interlace or acanthus decoration), that in comparison with the continental works, were pervasive in Anglo-Saxon art across all media. Such framework, commonly in the form of decorative relief pellets, and drilled inserts, is a widespread motif found in metalwork and coinage dating from the seventh century, being perhaps initially inspired by late antique, Roman stylistic traditions.⁵⁴⁴ Examples include objects like the late eighth-century Rupertus cross (Fig. 4.13),⁵⁴⁵ the late eighth-century Ormside bowl (Fig. 4.15)⁵⁴⁶ and the early ninth-century Winchester reliquary (Fig. 4.73),⁵⁴⁷ all of which display pellet frames analogous to those found on the contested

⁵⁴⁴ Webster, 2010: 43-48; for the coins, see Gannon, 2003 or Naismith, 2012. The deployment of this motif in the decorated metalwork is clearly due to the use of pellet filigree work.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: 170, cat. 133; Scharer, 2001: 69-75.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*: 173, cat. 134.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*: 175, cat. 136.

ivories of the group, with only the Zoomorphic panel not including it in its repertoire. On other metalwork objects it is clear that the pellet border was a feature that was worth highlighting, with inlays of enamel, garnet, or other precious stones being used to emphasize as well as act as the pellet or “beaded” elements of borders, like that seen on the early seventh-century Kingston Down brooch (Fig. 4.74A). It seems likely that the Last Judgement ivory may well have presented its beading in a similar manner, with a singular turquoise-coloured glass bead surviving in the gable (to the right of the circular tower) above the entrance to Heaven (Fig. 4.74B).⁵⁴⁸

In manuscript decoration, a likely early Christian source of the pellet framework is also suggested by the beading included in the evangelist portrait of Luke in the sixth century south Italian Gospels of Augustine (Fig. 4.75A), and while a mere flourish in this instance, it is included with some frequency in many Anglo-Saxon manuscripts produced between the seventh to ninth centuries: there is a pellet (or jewelled) border surrounding the portrait of Ezra in the late seventh-century Codex Amiatinus (Fig. 4.75B); it features in the eighth-century Tiberius Bede (Fig. 4.76A); within the Chi-Rho monogram of St Matthew’s gospel in the early eighth-century Lindisfarne Gospels (Fig. 4.76B); and it is repeated in the c.820-40 Book of Cerne, in the portraits of Luke and Mark (Fig. 4.77A,B). In stone, while examples are minimal, the late eighth-century Auckland St Andrew cross, Co. Durham (Fig. 4.78) displays a carved pellet border surrounding the figural panels on the south broad face of the shaft, and it can be seen on a fragment of a ninth-century cross-slab found in a garden in Dorset in 2014 (Fig. 4.79).⁵⁴⁹

Zoomorphic Interlace

Zoomorphic interlace decoration is perhaps the most notably prevalent stylistic feature of all artistic media from across the entire Anglo-Saxon period, and of the contested ivory pieces, only the Zoomorphic and Virgin and Apostles panels display carved zoomorphic interlace similar to the type of animal art common to Anglo-Saxon metalwork of the ninth century. Characterised by the use of paired, backwards-facing biting animals with sophisticated plant interlace, such work is seen on the six early

⁵⁴⁸ See further below, Chapter 6.

⁵⁴⁹ For Auckland St Andrew, see CASSS, vol. I; for the Dorset piece, see *The Telegraph*, 03/12/2014, website.

ninth-century silver openwork disc brooches from Pentney, Norfolk (Fig. 4.14) and the mid ninth-century silver, gold and niello Strickland Brooch (Fig. 4.12A).⁵⁵⁰ While the Virgin-Apostles panel combines the pellet border with zoomorphic interlace, the Zoomorphic panel features only animal interlace ornament, but it nevertheless retains very clear borders both within and surrounding the composition, in a manner analogous to that employed by the pellet and zoomorphic interlace framework of the Virgin-Apostles panel. These two panels therefore both display awareness of Anglo-Saxon styles of zoomorphic interlace, as well as profile zoomorphs biting the surrounding foliage or each other, and a variety of full-bodied bipeds and quadrupeds. It is possible that if the Zoomorphic panel was not quite so worn, more details might have allowed further detailed comparison of it with the Virgin-Apostles zoomorphic style than is now possible.

The zoomorphic interlace seen on the Zoomorphic and Virgin-Apostles ivory, is also widespread in early Anglo-Saxon manuscript art, featuring: below Mark in the Cutbercht Gospels (Fig. 4.8a); in the roundels in the columns flanking David the Psalmist of the *Vespasian Psalter* which include birds and quadrupeds similar to those of the central panels of the Zoomorphic ivory (Fig. 4.6); and also the small (but significant) zoomorphic interlace found within the *Tiberius Bede* (Fig. 4.76A) which is reminiscent of the animal heads and bodies poking out of the vines within the borders of both the Virgin-Apostles and Zoomorphic panels.

The zoomorphic interlace found in the stone sculpture of Anglo-Saxon England also recalls the biting poses (facing both front and back) displayed on the Zoomorphic and Virgin-Apostles ivory panels. Examples include: the eighth-century Jedburgh screen fragment, which displays zoomorphic interlace similar to that of the ivory panels with its individual roundels of zoomorphic interlace (Fig 4.80); the late eighth-century Auckland St Andrew cross which includes zoomorphs inhabiting the plant scroll on the narrow (east and west) faces of the shaft (Fig. 4.78); an early ninth-century cross-shaft fragment from Nunnykirk, with its frontal broad side displaying animals struggling within an interlace nearly identical to the two central panels of the Zoomorphic ivory (Fig. 4.81A); and the ninth-century Croft-on-Tees cross-shaft fragment, in its lower front panel showing four

⁵⁵⁰ See also, the ninth-century silver Fuller Brooch (Fig. 4.15B).

zoomorphs biting at the interlace that surrounds them, much like those on the Zoomorphic ivory (Fig. 4.81B).⁵⁵¹ Overall the zoomorphic interlace of this early group of contested ivories is endemic in Anglo-Saxon art of all media.

Figural Style

Compared with the dominant role of animal art, the depiction of the human figure, particularly in Anglo-Saxon metalwork, was limited. The style portrayed in the eighth and ninth century contested ivories is characterised by the use of a relatively stiff front-facing pose, with eyes stylised or abstracted to a drilled hole for the pupil and a line signifying the lid or brow, ribbed (or pellet shaped) hair, and undefined bodies with drapery of a markedly linear form with ribbed folds of drapery. This distinctive figural style is shared by the standing Christ on the lid of a late eighth-century gilt Anglo-Saxon chrismal (Fig 4.82A),⁵⁵² by the eighth-century gilt Mortain casket (Fig. 4.82B), and the silver plaque found at Hexham (Fig. 4.83), but it is more prevalent in the manuscripts that also display pellet decoration and zoomorphic interlace, which underlines the value of considering these three stylistic devices as working in tandem. Overall, the linear faces and small neat eyes of the figures found in the Last Judgement, Baptism and Ascension, *Majestas* and Virgin-Apostles panels are common to a number of manuscript illuminations in Anglo-Saxon England, specifically (but not exclusively): in the miniatures of the Augustine Gospels (Fig. 4.84); the figure of Christ Crucified in the Durham Gospels (Fig. 4.85); the Luke miniature of the St Chad Gospels (Fig. 4.86A).

Featured in the stone sculpture of the period, the strictly forwards-facing poses, curled or pellet shaped hair, angular-shaped faces, stylised ribbed drapery and elongated hands, are found on the late eighth-century Rothbury cross-shaft (Fig. 4.87A) which has similarities to the Christ in the Last Judgement as well as the figures in the Genoels-Elderen diptych; the late eighth- or early ninth-century Virgin preserved at Breedon-on-the-Hill (Fig. 4.87B),⁵⁵³ whose eyes and face bear a marked similarity those of Christ in the Last Judgement ivory, while the style of her hair, her gesture and ribbed drapery can

⁵⁵¹ For Jedburgh, see: CASSS, vol. II; Auckland St Andrew, see: CASSS, vol I; Nunnykirk, see: CASSS, vol. I; Croft-on-Tees, see: CASSS, vol. VII; see further Henderson, 1983: 252; Gannon, 2003: 118.

⁵⁵² See Webster, 2012a: 165 fig. 125-26; currently in a private possession.

⁵⁵³ Webster, 2012a: fig. 86.

also be found on the *Majestas* ivory,⁵⁵⁴ and the Auckland, Co. Durham cross (Fig. 4.87C) with its stiff figural style in the portrayal of the figures on the north and south faces of the shaft, and the north, south, east and west faces of the cross base.⁵⁵⁵ In all cases, these sculptural examples have been demonstrated to depend on late antique, early Christian prototypes of fourth- to sixth-century date, emerging from Roman and eastern Mediterranean contexts.⁵⁵⁶

In light of such comparison it is not unreasonable to suggest that the eighth and ninth-century group of contested ivories can be considered as possible Anglo-Saxon productions in their use of the three stylistic features of beading (borders and halos), zoomorphic interlace and the stiff, frontal figural style.

4.3b(ii) The Mid Ninth to Tenth Century

The mid ninth- to tenth-century ivories are completely different stylistically to the earlier group, so much so that, being the re-carved versos of the Last Judgement, Zoomorphic and Baptism-Ascension reliefs they have proven to be the defining element in all arguments concerning the original dating and provenance of the pieces. In part this might be due to the fact that there is less evidence among the Anglo-Saxon metalwork, stone sculpture and manuscript illuminations with which to compare them; nevertheless, there is sufficient to reconsider them as Anglo-Saxon, possibly created under continental influence, rather than relegating them, almost by default, to a continental origin with little or no consideration, not only of either the extant comparable mid ninth- and tenth-century Anglo-Saxon material, but also to their “earlier sides”.

The difficulty here lies primarily with any comparable material that would support a proposed date and/or stylistic origin for these three panels. This highlights two distinct issues: first, despite the fact that the later ninth century saw a wealth of artistic and intellectual growth in Anglo-Saxon England, due in part to the reforming efforts of Alfred the Great, there is an apparent lack of art conclusively dated to the ninth century, perhaps

⁵⁵⁴ See also the ninth-century cross-shaft at Codford St Peter’s, Wiltshire (CASSS, vol. VII); the Virgin on the late eighth-century Wirksworth stone, Derbyshire (Hawkes, 1995: 246-89); and the eighth-century St Andrew’s Sarcophagus, which Isabel Henderson (1993: 243-68) has argued displays close dependence on Mercian art.

⁵⁵⁵ See CASSS, vol. I.

⁵⁵⁶ See, e.g. Hawkes, 1995: 246-89; 1996: 77-94.

because of the assumption that it ceased to be produced, or production was reduced during the period of Scandinavian incursions and settlements. While this might indeed be the case, it is clear that some ecclesiastical institutions remained and flourished, such as Canterbury and Durham that facilitated the conversion of, and political alliances with, Scandinavians during the ninth century (here the baptism of Guthrum in 878 is of note).⁵⁵⁷ The lack of art from the ninth century may thus be more presumed than real. Because of, or rather in line with, such a dearth of extant artistic works from the ninth century, there are no ivories (uncontested or otherwise) dated decisively to this century. While some could be labelled “late eighth or early ninth century”, the absence of confirmed extant ivories from that century remains. Admittedly while this coincides with the archaeological and economic information,⁵⁵⁸ it does leave a large gap in comparanda available to analyse the Anglo-Saxon “style” of this century.

Second, is the confusion inherent in the recent scholarship on these pieces. Williamson, for instance, observed that these three specific carvings should be dated to within fifty years of their ‘original’ earlier carved sides (which he dated to *c.* 800), and located to a continental centre (“probably Champagne [Reims]”).⁵⁵⁹ To a certain extent, this contradicts his acknowledgement that the Zoomorphic panel’s “inhabited scroll ornament... must ultimately derive from Insular sources... which in turn translated Roman models into an Anglo-Saxon vernacular style”, and his comparison of it with the *c.* 800 Easby cross from Anglo-Saxon Northumbria,⁵⁶⁰ while claiming that the provenance of the Last Judgement scheme “remains enigmatic” but that as it can likely be attributed to “a continental workshop [operating] under the influence of both Insular and Italian models, and with access to earlier ivory carvings; the latter would appear to rule out Anglo-Saxon England”.⁵⁶¹ Likewise, Michelli’s re-dating of both the initial carvings and their re-carved versos to the eleventh century, based upon ecclesiastic movements and manuscript illumination within Anglo-Saxon England, is unrealistic.⁵⁶² Any suggestion of such a late dating is too far removed from the earliest group of ivories to be convincing, and it

⁵⁵⁷ Baptised by Æthelstan on his conversion to Christianity in 878, died *c.* 890. For more see Fletcher, 1999.

⁵⁵⁸ See Chapter 3.

⁵⁵⁹ Williamson, 2010: 152, 153.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*: 154, cat. 37.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 2010: 152, 153, cat. 36.

⁵⁶² Michelli, 2012: 108-111.

contradicts the overwhelming evidence that situates the initial carvings at the turn of the ninth century. It further implies that the ivories, carved at this time, were not reused till the early eleventh century, some two centuries later – at a time when, as already demonstrated, walrus ivory was highly prized and readily available, negating the need to recycle earlier ivories. In addition, illuminated manuscripts created in Anglo-Saxon England in the tenth century have been overlooked when considering possible dates of the re-carved schemes. Given such confusions in the arguments concerning the dates of these re-carvings, it can be as easy to argue that the stylistic features presented by the three re-carved ivories indicate that they were made in Anglo-Saxon England, with access to continental material, as to argue the reverse: that they were made in continental centres under Insular influence.

The dilemma posed by both sides of the Last Judgement/Transfiguration, Zoomorphic/Ascension, and Baptism-Ascension/Entry is thus the question of *when* as well as *where*. As the earlier compositions have been demonstrably linked stylistically to Anglo-Saxon England, why these objects should be linked automatically to continental centres due to their *later*, stylistically different reverses remains unclear. Furthermore, given that the ‘idea’ of Anglo-Saxon England as a simple artistic community is not realistic, it is entirely possible that in the presumed (for the sake of argument) fifty-year time-span between the two phases of carving that models illustrating the Transfiguration, Ascension and Entry could have crossed the Channel and, inspired by encounters with these models in Anglo-Saxon England, the ivory versions were perhaps rendered less confidently when set alongside their Carolingian counterparts. To deny the possibility that a mid to late ninth or tenth century, Anglo-Saxon centre could accomplish such a re-carving is to limit the scope of possible provenances, and to ignore the flow and counter-flow of stylistic influences between ecclesiastical centres, kingdoms and regions in the early medieval period.

Taking this latter aspect of the re-carvings first – the apparent differential in the quality of a carving – it is clear that the Entry ivory is probably the most ‘continental’ of the three re-carved panels. Yet, while showing attention to the border, figural details and drapery, the manner in which the scene is carved reveals hesitation with its flat representation of humans compared to the more robust carving (and avid undercutting) of figures in other continental (ninth-century) ivory plaques, such as the covers of the Psalter and Prayer book of Charles the Bald (Fig. 4.61B); the Marriage at Cana panel (Fig. 4.62);

the Gregory with Scribes panel in Vienna (Fig. 4.88A) or the c.870 Arrest of Christ panel at the Louvre (Fig. 4.88B). Tenth century continental panels show much the same technique and style as the ninth-century ivories, seen specifically in the Byzantine Borradaile Triptych or the Harbaville Triptych (Fig. 4.89A,B). Upon closer inspection, the other two re-carvings also show varying levels of hesitation, something that would be unexpected if the craftsman was completely familiar with the style featured on the panels. On the Transfiguration and Ascension, the figures are flatter and less refined than their Carolingian counterparts, revealing less detail in all aspects (drapery, figural features, architectural/background composition and the acanthus border), even taking account of the evident wear suffered by the panels that masks many details. With this in mind, therefore, these ivories might suggest the possibility of copying (albeit good copies) by carvers familiar with the Carolingian creative output, but who were not themselves practised in the techniques current in Carolingian centres. This might arguably imply an Anglo-Saxon (or Insular) carver copying a work of Carolingian origin.

Here, however, the suggestion of fifty years separating the two phases of carving of each panel does need to be addressed, as it is presented without explanation or support. While Williamson does provide one stylistic argument for the Transfiguration and Ascension panels (comparing them to the *Traditio Legis* and Enthroned Virgin ivories), and reiterates the work of Goldschmidt and Wright,⁵⁶³ he makes no attempt to provide any other supporting evidence for the date or provenance of the plaques. The fifty-year separation is only mentioned once, as part of the discussion of the Zoomorphic panel:

these plaques [the Last Judgement and Zoomorphic ivories] must have been removed from the book cover within fifty years and were then [re-carved and] reemployed as doors in the third quarter of the ninth century.⁵⁶⁴

Here no mention is made of when the carving was done beyond dating the panels to “probably about 800” and “probably in Reims by about 850”. Although this fifty-year separation is only specified in relation to the Transfiguration and Ascension ivories, the Entry panel is also described as emerging from a “late eighth- or early ninth-century” context, and was “in Lorraine by about 870”, which clearly implies another assumed fifty-

⁵⁶³ Williamson, 2012: 191.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid.: 149.

year separation.⁵⁶⁵ To support the claim, the Baptism-Ascension/Entry – like the Last Judgement/Transfiguration and Zoomorphic/Ascension ivories – is vaguely linked stylistically to other ivories (the *Majestas*, LoC diptych, and the so-called later Metz group of late ninth- or tenth-century St Gall ivories: Fig. 4.71B),⁵⁶⁶ but only in the process of reiterating previous scholarship.

Given the unsubstantiated nature of the presumptions underpinning the fifty-year separation between the initial and subsequent carving of these panels, an alternate suggestion might be made: that the original and the re-carving took place in Anglo-Saxon England in the ninth to tenth centuries, when there was a comparative lack of both elephant and walrus ivory in the region – let alone the possibility of carving such large flat panels out of walrus tusks – meaning older ivories (imbued with attendant value), were needed to facilitate ‘new’ carvings.⁵⁶⁷ Admittedly, the apparent lack of ninth-century art with which stylistic comparisons might be made limits this avenue of enquiry to a certain extent, but material dating to the late ninth and tenth century does offer some potential comparanda and further allows discussion of the stylistic placement (and dating) of the panels as a whole.

As noted, the number of extant metalwork objects that have been dated to the ninth century, specifically those of the mid- to late ninth century, is small, and constitute mainly high-status works which would coincide with the luxury value such ivory carvings would garner. While the pellet framework surrounding the mandorlas of Christ in both the Transfiguration and Ascension panels is a feature of the eighth-century Ardagh Chalice (Fig. 4.90),⁵⁶⁸ they also occur on the mid ninth-century ring of Æthelswith of Mercia, c.838-88 (Fig. 4.91A),⁵⁶⁹ and the late ninth-century Alfred Jewel (Fig. 4.91B).⁵⁷⁰ Evidence from Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture is also limited but carved pellet borders occur, not only on the mid eighth-century cross shaft of Auckland St Andrew, but also in the hair of the

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.: 149.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.: 197; Melzak, 1983: 100-4; Gaborit-Chopin, 1978: fig. 98.

⁵⁶⁷ See Chapter 3.

⁵⁶⁸ Webster & Backhouse, 1991: 170, cat. 133; Scharer, 2001: 69-75.

⁵⁶⁹ Webster & Backhouse, 1991: 269, cat. 244.

⁵⁷⁰ Webster, 2012a: 152, fig. 114. More recently, there has been a Viking hoard excavated in Dumfries and Galloway in Scotland that contained an Anglo-Saxon silver cross with enamelled Evangelist symbols, however there are no images of the object after conservation/cleaning so details are hazy whether or not any beading is present. For more see below, in Chapter 5 on ivory crucifixions.

figure in the later cross-shaft at St Peter's (Codford) in Wiltshire (Fig. 4.92) and the frame of the cross-head at Cropthorne, Worcestershire (Fig. 4.18A),⁵⁷¹ and the early ninth-century Book of Cerne (Fig. 4.77).

However it is the manuscript illumination of the tenth century that provides the clearest evidence that the three re-carved ivory surfaces may be better dated to that century rather than the mid ninth century or the much later eleventh century as has been previously proposed. In these contexts, beading features more prominently than in the earlier manuscripts and contested ivories, being used to highlight details rather than acting primarily as a border: the *c.*971-84 Benedictional of Æthelwold, specifically showing the baptism of Christ, highlights both Christ and John the Baptist have pellet halos, while the mandorla surrounding Christ is also shown in the same manner (Fig. 4.93), and the Æthelstan Psalter (Fig. 4.42A) includes not only a decorated (pellet) mandorla, but also pellets within the mandorla that surrounds Christ and the audience of martyrs, confessors and saints. In this it can be compared to the (simpler, more stylised) mandorlas in the Transfiguration and Ascension panels, as well as within the larger border that encompasses both schemes. Although pellet framework within and surrounding the garments, halos and bodies of the figures is found earlier in Anglo-Saxon manuscript illumination and on the Baptism-Ascension, LoC diptych, and *Majestas* panels, it is a stylistic feature that does seem to gain prominence in the tenth to eleventh century.

The absence of zoomorphic interlace in the decoration of any of the three verso panels is interesting in itself, but particularly notable is the fact that the figural style does not imitate that of Anglo-Saxon art of the eighth or ninth centuries, any more than it does the figural style of the more "naturalistically" rendered figures of continental art. In this respect, it is worth noting that some continental features do appear in Anglo-Saxon art of the ninth and tenth centuries, such as the acanthus border so ubiquitous in Carolingian art. This can be seen within the borders of the New Minster Charter (Fig. 4.94A); in the borders of the Benedictional of Æthelwold (Fig. 4.94B),⁵⁷² in the border of the stone crucifixion at St Dunstan, Stepney (Fig. 4.94C), and in the Pectoral ivory (Fig. 4.94D), with many more examples featuring in the arts of the late tenth and eleventh centuries.

⁵⁷¹ Kendrick, 1943: pl. LXXX, 1; see, CASSS, vol. X.

⁵⁷² As most of the borders in the illuminations include some form of acanthus leaf, it is unnecessary to list folio numbers here.

This demonstrates that Anglo-Saxon artists were open to the styles of the continent, but continued to add their own flourishes in the process of appropriation.⁵⁷³

It is perhaps in the tenth-century Anglo-Saxon manuscripts that the linear figural style of the ivories is best referenced: manuscripts such as Bede's *Lives of St Cuthbert* (Fig. 4.95) and the Æthelstan Psalter (Fig. 4.42A) display a stylistic sensibility that reflects both the Anglo-Saxon preference for the linear and stiff figural carving, while acknowledging the 'new' continental style of drapery and figural flourishes. The New Minster Charter (Fig. 4.96A), St Dunstan at the feet of the risen Christ in *St Dunstan's Classbook* (Fig. 4.96B), the figure of Christ in Gregory's *Pastoral Care* (Fig. 4.97A), the figure of Philosophy in Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* (Fig. 4.97B) the figures in the Benedictional of Æthelwold, and even the Ramsey Psalters all present stylistic traits seen in the tenth-century court schools of Charlemagne and Charles the Bald as well as Metz and Reims reinterpreted by artists in Anglo-Saxon England. These imply that such features on the re-carved panels of the Transfiguration, Ascension and Entry into Jerusalem could very well have been carved in Anglo-Saxon England in the tenth century.

This evidence, and the lack of supporting arguments for the Transfiguration, Ascension and Entry being continental creations (beyond the assertion that "they are distinctly Carolingian, and no special pleading is needed to see their connection"),⁵⁷⁴ certainly places them at a crossroads, highlighting the fluid interpretations and processes of appropriation being practiced in artistic centres in the later ninth- and tenth-centuries. Like the contested Anglo-Saxon ivories of the eighth to ninth centuries, these too display a variety of styles in connection with Anglo-Saxon artistic practices albeit with different emphases being placed on the use of the motifs.

4.3b(iii) The Late Tenth to Mid-Eleventh Century

The final group of contested ivories, those belonging to the late tenth to mid-eleventh centuries, shows yet another aspect of the range of styles evident in Anglo-Saxon England. While the *Traditio Legis* (cat. 27, Fig. 3.14A) and Virgin and Child Enthroned (cat. 28, Fig. 3.14B) were likely carved within the same workshop (if not by the same hand) and express similar stylistic characteristics, the Pectoral is altogether unique (cat. 31, Fig.

⁵⁷³ See further Rickert, 1954: pls 28-29, 31, 36.

⁵⁷⁴ Williamson, 2012: 193.

4.32). That being said, each ivory has been linked to either the Continent or Anglo-Saxon England for varying reasons. With this in mind, it is important to consider their stylistic characteristics in the light of both tenth- and eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon works generally, and the earlier contested ivories, to explore how these characteristics continued to be invoked (albeit in varying forms and degrees), and so further supporting the suggestion that their creation within an Anglo-Saxon centre might be possible.

Now covering either side of a modern black leather binding holding a mid ninth-century Evangelistery,⁵⁷⁵ both the *Traditio Legis* and Enthroned Virgin panels are abraded but there is still much to be observed. The *Traditio Legis* includes a bearded Christ with a pellet carved cruciform halo sitting within an elaborately beaded mandorla, flanked by two angels; below, Paul and Peter extend their arms to receive the book and keys respectively. Between them reclines the twisted figure of Oceanus; a foliate border frames the entire composition. Similarly, the Enthroned Virgin sits on an elaborately pellet carved throne, holding the Christ Child, and flanked above by two venerating angels; the whole is surrounded by a pellet and acanthus border. The elaborate beading that highlights the figures has been found on nearly every contested ivory and proliferates in late tenth- to mid eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon art: within the halos of the figures set in the frame of the portable porphyry altar held at the Musée de Cluny (Fig. 4.99); some (but not all) of the haloes and mandorlas of the c.975-980 Benedictional of Æthelwold (see for instance the illuminations of Ætheltheryth, the Entry into Jerusalem, the Ascension, the Baptism of Christ, and Nativity; and the pellet halo of Christ in both the Harrowing of Hell and Crucifixion images in the c.1050 Tiberius Psalter (Fig. 4.100A,B).

Like the ninth- to tenth-century contested ivories, the *Traditio Legis* and Enthroned Virgin do not include zoomorphic interlace, but their figural style, characterised by distinctive limbs and upper/lower body parts, frontal facing poses and rigid drapery, can be paralleled by the Christ figures in both *St Dunstan's Classbook* (Fig. 4.96B) and Gregory's *Pastoral Care* (Fig. 4.97A), which show similar facial features to Christ in the *Traditio Legis* and the Virgin in the Enthroned ivory. Likewise, the drapery, attitudes and figural style of the *Traditio Legis* can be paralleled in many Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, specifically (but not exclusively): the treatment of the figures and garments of Christ enthroned, the surrounding angels and upturned face and body of King Edgar in the New

⁵⁷⁵ Beckwith, 1972: 122-3, cat. 23.

Minster Charter (Fig. 4.96A); the bearded and cruciform-haloed Christ of the Ramsey Psalter (Fig. 4.34A); and the stylistic features of the dedication page of the New Minster *Liber Vitae* (Fig. 4.42B) with its angels, Christ figure, and flowing drapery.

The Enthroned Virgin can be similarly situated: the winged angels flanking the Virgin and Child can be closely compared, not only to the angels of the Ascension panel (cat. 14), but also those found in the *c.*966 New Minster Charter (Fig. 4.24A) and the figure of Philosophy in Boethius' *Consolation* (*c.*970) can also be compared with the Enthroned Virgin in its frontal attitude, facial details and drapery, including the small flourishes at the ends of the Virgin's robes (Fig. 4.97B); the figure of Æthelthryth in the Benedictional of Æthelwold (971-84) can likewise be considered similar to the Enthroned Virgin in the treatment of her drapery and halo (despite Æthelthryth's facing slightly away from the viewer (Fig. 4.101); while the small Virgin and Child enthroned image within the top border of the Incipit page of the Grimbald Gospels with its drapery (Fig. 4.29A), angels and haloed figures is also comparable to the Enthroned Virgin ivory.

4.4 Conclusions

Having outlined the numerous ways in which the carved framework, zoomorphs and distinctive figural style of the contested ivories are reflected in the Anglo-Saxon metalwork, stone sculpture and manuscript painting, it is clear that (variously) these motifs were current in the region throughout the early medieval period. Previous scholarship has consistently noted these stylistic features in discussions of the contested (and uncontested) ivories, although not in great detail. Here, detailed consideration of their presence has demonstrated that the ivories can be more closely located (stylistically) within Anglo-Saxon contexts at various times throughout the period, rather than simply relegating them to continental centres.

Overall, it is clear that the stylistic features of the contested ivories were widely available in Anglo-Saxon England, being reproduced in art of all media. The many pieces of metalwork, stone carvings and manuscript illuminations featuring the stylistic characteristics of carved borders, zoomorphs and the stiff figural type demonstrate how widespread these features were in the art of the region, and how rare they were on the continent. They thus suggest that, stylistically, the contested ivories are as likely to have

emerged from an Anglo-Saxon context as any other, and in many cases perhaps suggest a firmer dating might be possible within that frame of reference.

CHAPTER 5
THE QUESTION OF ICONOGRAPHY:
SUBJECT, SUBSTANCE, FORM AND FUNCTION

5.1 Introduction

While style is concerned with compositional form and the perceived resemblance between works of art to each other and their broader place within artistic trends, iconography (or iconology) offers a different approach to artistic production. Defining these terms in his *Studies in Iconology* (1939), Erwin Panofsky explained it as “the branch of the history of art which concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to form”,⁵⁷⁶ and “an attempt to analyse the significance of that subject matter within the culture that produced it”,⁵⁷⁷ thus iconography focuses narrowly, and iconology widens the lens and looks at broader contexts. While his definitions of this methodological approach were based on his study of later medieval and early modern paintings through the documentation associated specifically with artists and their individual works – sources not usually available to art historians of the early medieval when the artist is generally anonymous and the documentation limited, at best – Panofsky’s separating of ‘iconography’ and ‘iconology’ provides a useful means of exploring the symbolic significances of Anglo-Saxon ivories in terms of the subject matter carved in relief on the surface of the panels, their substance/materiality, and the form and function of both the images and the objects. It is the aim of this chapter, therefore, to include both parts of the ‘iconological’ process identified by Panofsky by considering the ivories of Anglo-Saxon England in two distinct but connected ways: by examining them in terms of their ‘iconography’ as distinct groups can be identified according to their shared subject-matter and compositions; and that ‘iconology’ in which the symbolic significances of these aspects of the images, can be viewed within the wider context of artistic and theological expression in the Insular world. Here (*contra* Panofsky), the art itself becomes the ‘document’ illuminating these wider contexts.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁶ Panofsky, 1939: 3.

⁵⁷⁷ Panofsky, 1955: 26-54.

⁵⁷⁸ Meyer, 2005.

Drawing on earlier methodologies and scholarly traditions,⁵⁷⁹ scholars such as Éamonn Ó Carragáin, Richard Bailey and Jane Hawkes began, in the 1980s and '90s, to consider the iconography and symbolic significances of Anglo-Saxon art, specifically the sculpture, to determine the art historical sources (the iconographic influences) lying behind the carvings, and their symbolic significances – by considering the manner in which the details of the figural carvings were articulated in terms of contemporary liturgical, exegetical and other literary texts known to have been circulating or written in Anglo-Saxon England at the time.⁵⁸⁰ Analogous approaches were undertaken at the same time by scholars such as Jennifer O'Reilly and Carol Farr in terms of the art of Insular manuscripts, and Anna Gannon in the field of Anglo-Saxon numismatics.⁵⁸¹

Underpinning the approaches taken in these studies was the understanding that Christian art was produced, in its earliest articulations, to signify something 'other' than that which it notionally depicted.⁵⁸² Thus, the earliest Christian art is generally accepted as having been directed toward the informed (Christian) viewer in such a way that the 'image-signs' could be understood and the potential complexity of their frames of reference, interpreted.⁵⁸³ The effectiveness of the iconography of these early 'image-signs' cannot be overstated, given that the meaning and purpose of the imagery (albeit undergoing adaptations through the centuries in keeping with current theological debate) has largely remained unchanged. Much of the original Christian iconography stemmed from pagan Greco-Roman artistic traditions and the iconographic traditions developed in the early years of the Church continued to function as a living visual language among subsequent generations including those in north-western Europe and Anglo-Saxon England.

This is not to say that the iconography of Anglo-Saxon England merely copied early Christian models circulating in the Mediterranean. Indeed, Hawkes' work on the iconography of Anglo-Saxon sculpture has demonstrated that the early Christian models available to the artists could be, and were, adapted and represented reactions to these

⁵⁷⁹ See e.g. Didron, 1843; Stokes, 1851; Mâle, 1891; 1922; Warburg, 1920; 1932; Saxl, 1915; 1925; 1927; 1954; Panofsky, 1939.

⁵⁸⁰ See e.g.: Bailey, 1993; 1996a; Ó Carragáin, 2005; Hawkes, 1989; 1995; 1996; 2001; 2002; 2008; 2013; 2014a; 2014b.

⁵⁸¹ See e.g.: O'Reilly, 1994; Farr, 1997; Gannon, 2003.

⁵⁸² Grabar, 1969: 7; see also, Dodwell, 1982; Webster, 2012a.

⁵⁸³ Grabar, 1969: 8.

motifs in keeping with more contemporary theological viewpoints.⁵⁸⁴ The question will arise here, therefore, as to whether the images carved on the Anglo-Saxon ivories should be considered to display, generally, Christian iconography, or whether the adaptations undertaken in the Insular workshops indicate that they can be considered to articulate, specifically, Anglo-Saxon Christian iconography. While the line between early medieval and Anglo-Saxon styles is often blurred, so too is that of the iconography of the ivories when considering how the details of a given image might be compared with an analogous representation produced on the Continent, particularly when examining the art historical sources of such an image (that might lie in Rome, the Eastern Empire and/or Carolingian Gaul). This will, nevertheless, reveal much about the nature of the cultural contacts and intellectual milieu of Anglo-Saxon England.

The story of the development of iconography in Anglo-Saxon England is thus a complex one, a narrative that reaches beyond the Church to include various influences resulting from contacts with settlers from various parts of the Continent, and ecclesiastical and secular exchanges of personnel, ideas and objects. It remains the case, however, that the Church was of continuing importance in the production of the ivories carved in Anglo-Saxon England, nearly all of which display Christian subject matter and iconography. Thus, setting aside questions or arguments relating to style and provenance,⁵⁸⁵ this chapter will explore the iconography of the ivories of Anglo-Saxon England, concentrating on the figural carvings, in two distinct chronological groups. Initially, the ivories of the eighth to mid-tenth centuries will be considered as part of the general output of Christian art during the early medieval period in England, including the ways in which the iconography of the Anglo-Saxon ivories was influenced by, appropriated from, and may in turn have contributed to the iconography produced in continental centres. Following this, the ivories of the late tenth to mid-eleventh centuries will be analysed according to their subject matter, specifically focusing on the significant schematic changes having been influenced by the Benedictine reform and its focus on the redeeming quality of Christ and the Virgin, rather than the narrative scenes seen in the ivories produced before the mid tenth century. It must be acknowledged that this discussion of the ivories and their iconography does not include all the extant Anglo-Saxon pieces; for the sake of brevity only those generally

⁵⁸⁴ See e.g. Hawkes, 1993: 254-60.

⁵⁸⁵ See Chapter 4.

deemed significant within the wider context of early medieval ivories from England have been selected. It must be reiterated that this chapter on the iconography of the ivories will be much more of an overview, rather than an exhaustive investigation, which opens the door for further study as any analysis of such a subject could produce another thesis on its own, and cannot be so thoroughly discussed here due to word count limitations.

5.2 The Iconography of the Early Ivories: Influence, Appropriation and the Narrative

5.2a The Eighth and Early Ninth Centuries

The Franks Casket

As already noted, the best-known of the earlier Anglo-Saxon ivories is perhaps the Franks Casket (cat. 2, Fig. 2.2). Its early eighth century combination of Christian and non-Christian ‘secular’ themes (of which only the former will be discussed here),⁵⁸⁶ includes on the right-hand side of the front panel three male figures bearing objects in their extended arms, walking towards the Virgin with the Child before her, both set beneath an arch, along with the word *Maegi* spelt out in runes above them (Fig. 2.2B).⁵⁸⁷ The runic inscription and figural composition allow it to be identified as depicting the Adoration of the Magi, and furthermore seem to identify it as conforming to the ‘processional’ type of Adoration characterised by the profile figures of the Magi advancing towards the Virgin and Child, as opposed to being gathered around them in the more ‘hierarchic’ or ‘iconic’ arrangement where the Virgin and Child were seated frontally and centrally in majesty while the magi surrounded the pair.⁵⁸⁸ However, set alongside the corpus of Processional

⁵⁸⁶ Here the term ‘secular’ is used to denote historic and legendary material circulating in Germanic and Roman societies that are illustrated on the Casket: Weland (front panel, left-hand side), Egil (lid), Hos and Erta (right side panel); Romulus and Remus (left side panel). While this latter scene and that of the Fall of Jerusalem (back panel) have been argued (convincingly) to have Christian significances (e.g. Webster, 2012b: 33-43), they are not included here as they do not present overtly Christian iconographic schemes. For further discussion, see: Abels, 2009: 549-81; Francovich Onesti, 1998: 295-313; Webster, 1999: 227-46; 2012b.

⁵⁸⁷ Webster argues convincingly for the interpretation that the entire Casket should be addressed as a large riddle, with scenes being connected by Christian themes even when the carvings may not show Christian imagery. She connects the Adoration and the corresponding scene of Weyland the Smith on the other half of the front panel through the Christian themes of salvation and deliverance, exile and kingship. However, the constraints of this study mean discussion will focus only on the Adoration as demonstrating biblical iconographic motifs.

⁵⁸⁸ Schiller, 1971a: 104; see also Hawkes, 2002a.

schemes in early Christian art it is clear that the iconographic details of the Anglo-Saxon scene display distinct variations.

The iconography of Adoration, an event recounted only in Matthew 2:1-12, was illustrated as early as the second century in the Catacomb of Priscilla in Rome (Fig. 5.1A),⁵⁸⁹ but by the third century it featured commonly on sarcophagi, where it was usually articulated as three youths, often dressed in short tunics, cloaks, leggings and the distinctive cloth Phrygian cap, who process behind one another holding out gifts in bowls towards the Virgin and Child who were portrayed in profile.⁵⁹⁰ Clearly the Magi on the Franks Casket conform to this general arrangement and figure-type, although their clothing may reflect contemporary Anglo-Saxon styles rather than that featured in early Christian art.⁵⁹¹

On the casket, however, while the Magi approach in file, the Virgin and Child face the viewer and it is unclear whether they are seated: the Virgin's head surmounts a slightly oval-shaped frame surrounding the face of the Child, itself surrounded by a cruciform halo, and no other part of their bodies is included; below are a series of pellets and a sub-rectangular block decorated with zig-zag lines that fills the space between the bases of the columns supporting the arch. While this feature may have been intended to signify the lower portion of a jewelled, cushioned throne with a footrest, like that depicted in the early sixth-century mosaic scheme at Sant' Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna (Fig. 5.1B),⁵⁹² this is far from clear. Set under an arch and facing forwards, however, the Virgin and Child echo the iconic type of Adoration, not only featured in Ravenna, but also on an early sixth-century Byzantine ivory at the British Museum (Fig. 5.2) that places the entire scheme beneath an elaborate arch with the Magi surrounding the Virgin and Child offering up their gifts. Unlike such schemes however, the pair on the Casket have been reduced to their faces only, and that of the Child seems to be set in a medallion, mirroring the curve of the arch above. In this respect it recalls the icon-type portraits of the Virgin and Child that gained currency in Rome in the seventh and eighth centuries: at Santa Maria Antiqua (Fig.

⁵⁸⁹ Schiller, 1971a: 104.

⁵⁹⁰ Schiller, 1971a: 97, 100.

⁵⁹¹ For discussion of the Magi's clothing on the Franks Casket, see e.g. Owen-Crocker, 2010: 168-70; Webster, 2012b: 45-6.

⁵⁹² See further Deliyannis, 2010.

5.3A), for instance, or the newly uncovered frescos in the narthex of Santa Sabina (Fig. 5.3B).

This might suggest that the iconographic type lying behind the scheme featured on the Franks Casket involved an image of the Virgin bearing the Child in a medallion before her, one that seems to have circulated in the West in the seventh and eighth centuries, a date not inconsistent with that postulated for the Casket. Such images, however, were not associated with the iconography of the Adoration of the Magi. Here then, the apparently Anglo-Saxon nature of the clothing worn by the Magi, their gifts and the articulation of the Star of Bethlehem might be significant.

From an early date the gifts of the Magi were depicted as crowns or were carried in bowls, like that seen in the Catacomb of Priscilla (Fig. 5.1A),⁵⁹³ but from the fifth century the vessels began to vary, with a fifth-century ivory in the Musée de la Faïence de Nevers (Fig. 5.4A) or the sixth-century ivory preserved at the Cathedral Treasury of Milan depicting one of the Magi bearing a horn (Fig. 5.4B).⁵⁹⁴ However, none of the variations bear any resemblance to those carried by the Magi on the Franks Casket, implying that they were designed specifically for the scheme. Supporting this suggestion is the distinctive nature of the star on the Casket that takes the form of a thirteen-petalled marigold motif. This is seen in an early fourth-century sarcophagus fragment from Rome (Fig. 5.5B), where one of the three Magi points to the marigold-star hanging over the stable of the Nativity; in the fifth-century triumphal arch mosaic in Sta Maria Maggiore where it appears above the enthroned Christ Child approached by the Magi (Fig. 5.6),⁵⁹⁵ above the Nativity in the lower register of the British Museum ivory depicting the icon type of Adoration (Fig. 5.2); an ivory relief of the Nativity on Maximian's Throne, *c.*545-46 (Fig. 2.1B);⁵⁹⁶ a number of the sixth-century ampullae now housed in the Cathedral Treasury at Monza (Fig. 5.7A);⁵⁹⁷ and in the seventh-or eighth-century reliquary painting of the Nativity on the inner lid of the Sancta Sanctorum Reliquary (Fig. 5.8).⁵⁹⁸ While the motif is common and features in images of the Adoration as well as the Nativity, nowhere

⁵⁹³ See also the fourth-century sarcophagus fragment at the Vatican (Fig. 5.6B).

⁵⁹⁴ See Volbach, 1922: no. 119.

⁵⁹⁵ See further Webb, 2001: 59-64.

⁵⁹⁶ See further, e.g.: Tracy & Budge, 2015: 1-19; Doig, 2008: 78-9.

⁵⁹⁷ See further Filipová, 2014: 13.

⁵⁹⁸ See further Hyslop, 1934: 333-40.

is it articulated as a thirteen-petalled flower as on the Anglo-Saxon Casket.⁵⁹⁹ Like the distinctive nature of the gifts borne by the Magi, the unique form of the Star of Bethlehem may indicate it was designed specifically for the scheme.

Thus, the iconographic details of the scheme depicted on the Casket, together with its arrangement suggest that those responsible for the design of the Adoration had access to an iconic image of the Virgin, perhaps one that was up-to-date and featured the Child in a mandorla held before the Virgin; they further suggest that the iconography of the Adoration of the Magi was known in Anglo-Saxon England, and its component elements (the profile figures of the Magi proceeding towards the Mother and Child bearing their gifts, and the Star of Bethlehem) were added to the iconic image to create the scheme. This is the earliest known example of the scene in Anglo-Saxon England and may therefore represent preliminary attempts by Anglo-Saxon artists to display a scheme that shows a growing knowledge of Christian motifs and exegetical material, while highlighting early endeavours at creating an Anglo-Saxon iconography.

Genoels-Elderen Diptych

Another of the early ivories is the Genoels-Elderen Diptych (cat. 6, Fig. 2.12) which depicts Christ carrying a cross staff and trampling the beasts (on the left-hand leaf), and the Annunciation and Visitation, one above the other, on the right leaf. The depiction of Christ triumphant treading on the beasts is based on Psalm 91.13 as the text inscribed around the image attests.⁶⁰⁰ In his discussion of the iconography Miguel cites Roman coins as the possible ultimate source of influence, and suggests that the theme “probably reached the country [Anglo-Saxon England] through its portrayal on such portable artefacts as the eighth-century ivory book covers from Genoels-Elderen, Belgium; or illuminated manuscripts such as the Utrecht Psalter”.⁶⁰¹ This fails to take into account of a number of issues: as noted, the Utrecht Psalter does not seem to have reached England until c.1000 and therefore would have been an unlikely source, stylistically or iconographically before

⁵⁹⁹ Interestingly, cat. 23 has four eight-petalled marigolds surrounding a *Majestas Christi* image, dated to the late tenth century.

⁶⁰⁰ Psalm 90.13: Super aspidem et basiliscum ambulabis; et conculcabis leonem et draconem; the ivory inscription reads: UBI DNS AMBULAVIT SUPER ASDEM ET BASLICU[?] ET CONCUL[L]ABIT LEO ET DRACONEM. Neuman de Vegvar, 1990: 9.

⁶⁰¹ Miguel, 1997: 76.

then; and as pointed out by Neuman de Vegvar, the motif was portrayed on the Ruthwell and Bewcastle crosses dated to the same period as the diptych (Fig. 4.52A-B); furthermore, the only coin of Constantine with analogous iconography is that of the bronze follis (AE3) issued in 327 in Constantinople after Constantine's defeat of Licinius (a pagan) in 324, the reverse of which shows a labarum, surmounted by a Chi-Rho piercing a serpent, possibly signifying a Christian victory (Fig. 5.9A).⁶⁰² Knowledge of this iconography was clearly circulating in Anglo-Saxon England in the eighth century when it was referenced, not only at Ruthwell and Bewcastle,⁶⁰³ but also in one of the illustrations of David in the Durham Cassiodorus (Fig. 4.5).⁶⁰⁴ The manner in which David in this manuscript was portrayed as a 'Type of Christ' has been convincingly argued by Bailey; thus while this miniature illustrates David overcoming his various combatants, it also illustrates Christ victorious, trampling the beast/s (signifying death and the devil).

Among these Anglo-Saxon versions of the scheme, the Genoels-Elderen Diptych image bears closest resemblance to the early Christian type illustrated in Ravenna, with Christ's cross staff held over his shoulder, and a book (closed) in his left hand (Fig. 5.1B). In the ivory, however, Christ tramples four beasts as noted in the Psalm: a lion and an asp (one under each foot), with two others likely intended to depict the basilisk and dragon; it is a detail also found on the later eighth-/early ninth-century back cover of the Lorsch Gospels preserved in the Vatican (Fig. 4.50), and on the *c.*800 Bodleian panel thought to have originated at Chelles, in France (Fig. 4.69A). On the diptych, Christ is flanked by two angels, a detail likewise presented on the Lorsch gospel cover, where the angels stand on either side in adjacent panels. In both cases these figures were perhaps intended to denote Christ's heavenly and magisterial nature, but were also probably inspired by Psalm 91.11.⁶⁰⁵ Thus, although demonstrating access to an early Christian iconographic type of the scheme of Christ triumphant over the beasts, that of the diptych suggests it was adapted to closely reference the verses of Psalm 91.11,13, with allusions to Christ overcoming death (the beasts) because of his salvation (starting with his ministry that

⁶⁰² Evans, 1877: 271-2; for a more recent discussion, see: Bardill, 2012: 220-22.

⁶⁰³ Ó Carragáin, 2005: 201-07.

⁶⁰⁴ Bailey, 1978.

⁶⁰⁵ Psalm 91:11: Quoniam angelis suis mandabit de te ut custodiant te in omnibus viis tuis; in manibus portabunt te ne forte offendas ad lapidem pedem tuum. ("For he hath given his angels charge over thee; to keep thee in all thy ways; in their hands they shall bear thee up: lest thou dash thy foot against a stone").

began with his time in the wilderness and the temptations he over came) referenced by the angels ‘supporting’ him in the panel.

The remaining half of the Genoels-Elderen diptych is associated with images from the infancy of Christ with the other leaf displaying the Annunciation (above) and the Visitation (below). The narrative of Mary’s conversation with the angel (Luke 1.26-38) and subsequent visit to Elizabeth (Luke 1.39-56) was elaborated in the second-century apocryphal *Protoevangelium of James*,⁶⁰⁶ and from the fifth century onwards the iconographic details of the visual representations of the events were based on this text.⁶⁰⁷ Thus, in the Annunciation featured on the Diptych, the detail of Mary holding the distaff and thread stems directly from the *Protoevangelium* account of her making the temple curtain at the time of the Annunciation.⁶⁰⁸

Visual representation of the event was early established and tended to show her either responding in amazement at the news delivered by the angel, or conversing with him.⁶⁰⁹ Both types were certainly well established by the sixth century, when the Virgin was often shown in a high-backed wicker chair and wearing a *maphorion* to show her continued virginity, as on the sixth-century ivory cover of the later (ninth century) Echmiadzin Gospels (Fig. 5.11), or the panel on the contemporary throne of Maximian (Fig. 2.1C). Equally, however, she could be depicted enthroned on an elaborate seat, as in the fifth-century mosaics in Sta Maria Maggiore (Fig. 5.6); the sixth-century apse mosaics in Sta Eufrasia in Poreč, in modern-day Croatia (Fig. 5.12); or similarly found in two sixth-century gold enkolpions, the Charito medallion held in a private collection (Fig. 5.9B),⁶¹⁰ the other at the Dumbarton Oaks Museum (Fig. 5.9C). Likewise she could be illustrated accompanied by a servant and placed in an architectural setting referencing the

⁶⁰⁶ Elliot, 2005: 48-67.

⁶⁰⁷ Schiller, 1971a: 34; see also: Hawkes, 1989; Skoblar, 2011.

⁶⁰⁸ Schiller, 1971a: 38; *Protoevangelium*: X. “Now there was a council of the priests, and they said: Let us make a veil for the temple of the Lord....And the priests called to mind the child Mary, that she was of the tribe of Avid and was undefiled before God: and the officers went and fetched her...And the lot of the true purple and the scarlet fell unto Mary, and she took them and went unto her house....Mary took the scarlet and began to spin it”. See also *Protoevangelium* XI and XII for further references to Mary spinning scarlet and purple textiles, Elliot, 2005: 48-67.

⁶⁰⁹ Schiller, 1971a: 55; Hawkes, 2007b: 19-36.

⁶¹⁰ The medallion came to auction September 2014; see Roma Numismatics E-Catalogue for more information.

increasing status allotted the Virgin.⁶¹¹ The incorporation of the elaborate bench throne, the servant and the architectural setting of the Genoels-Elderen Diptych version of the scene thus combine elements found in sixth-century Eastern versions of the Annunciation, which were receiving renewed popularity in late eighth- and ninth-century art.

Of particular interest in the Anglo-Saxon ivory, however, is the crossed-arm pose of the angel bearing his staff of office. The bearing of a staff is a common angelic attribute as seen on the Ravenna ivories, the Poreč mosaic and the Bodleian ivory; it identified their role as attendants of the heavenly throne. By contrast, the specifically crossed-arm pose is far from common in Continental works, and yet it is found in two of the three carved versions of the Annunciation produced in Anglo-Saxon England in the later eighth century: at Wirksworth in Derbyshire (Fig. 5.14A),⁶¹² and the early ninth century, at Hovingham in Yorkshire (Fig. 5.14B).⁶¹³ This suggests that while those responsible for the diptych Annunciation may have had access to an early (sixth century, possibly Eastern) iconographic version of the scene, this may have been unusual in depicting the angel with a crossed-arm pose; the existence of such a model type is certainly indicated by its reproduction in Anglo-Saxon England, particularly on the Wirksworth sarcophagus which Hawkes has argued, overall, reveals close dependence on Eastern iconographic types of sixth-century date.⁶¹⁴

By comparison, the Visitation image was less commonly illustrated in early Christian art.⁶¹⁵ Nevertheless, two different iconographic types were in circulation from an early date: one showed the two women embracing, the other showed them conversing and in Anglo-Saxon England, they are shown variably as conversing (on the Hovingham shrine, Fig. 5.14B), and embracing (on the Ruthwell cross). In the Genoels-Elderen diptych, the Virgin and Elizabeth embrace while being flanked by two watching figures, who have been identified as either Gabriel and Elizabeth's husband Zacharias, or merely a maid and Zacharias – a more likely explanation perhaps given the absence of wings from

⁶¹¹ See the Bodleian panel (Fig. 4.69), the Adoration panel (Fig. 5.2), and the Grado chair panel (Fig. 5.13). Schiller, 1971a: 37; see also: Hawkes, 1989; Skoblar, 2011.

⁶¹² Hawkes, 1995.

⁶¹³ Hawkes, 1989; 1993: 254-60; Lang, 1991: 146-48; A third sculptural version is preserved at Sandbach in Cheshire, dated to the early ninth century (Hawkes, 2002a: 29) this however is too damaged to ascertain if the angel had his arms crossed.

⁶¹⁴ Hawkes, 1995: 246-89.

⁶¹⁵ The Feast of the Visitation was not introduced until 1236 and it had no "independent position" (separate from the Annunciation) until the later Middle Ages. Schiller, 1971a: 55.

either figure, indicating that neither can be satisfactorily explained as Gabriel.⁶¹⁶ While the “identification” of Zacharias within this scene has led some to assign the ivory to the Carolingian court school, the figure was equally likely to have been added to the Genoels-Elderen diptych independent of Carolingian developments due to the presence in Anglo-Saxon England of scenes depicting Zacharias, such as the Annunciation to Zacharias (Luke 1.5-25) seen in the Augustine Gospels, generally accepted to have been in England from c.600 (Fig. 4.84B). Whether this was the case, the inclusion of two figures witnessing the Visitation is extremely unusual in the surviving corpus of such images from the early Christian period, and Neuman de Vegvar has questioned whether the artist understood their meaning or whether they were to be interpreted merely as attendants, perhaps providing a ‘balanced’ composition.⁶¹⁷

Nevertheless, considered overall, the iconographic sources lying behind the scenes preserved on the Genoels-Elderen Diptych seem likely to depend on early Christian types which had their origins in sixth-century art emerging from the Eastern Mediterranean that seem to have been circulating in Anglo-Saxon England in the eighth and early ninth centuries, and thereby bringing together source material and local artistic iconography to produce something altogether Anglo-Saxon.

Majestas, Virgin-Apostles, Baptism-Ascension and the Life of Christ Diptych

Grouped together stylistically, the *Majestas* panel (cat. 9, Fig. 4.49), the Virgin-Apostles (cat. 10, Fig. 3.8), the Baptism-Ascension panel (cat. 11, Fig. 3.13A), and the LoC Diptych (cat. 12, Fig. 3.9) can also be considered together iconographically and thematically. The LoC Diptych displays a number of scenes on two large panels: on the right (reading upwards), the Annunciation, Crucifixion and Abraham sacrificing Issac; on the left (reading upwards), the Baptism and Ascension, with the Virgin and Apostles and Christ ascending in Majesty. With this selection of scenes, the Diptych shares with the other three ivories the *Majestas*, the figures of the Virgin and Apostles, the Ascension and the Baptism.

The image of the *Majestas*, was one of the most enduring in early Christian and medieval art, and one of the earliest to replicate imperial art, where the image of the ruler

⁶¹⁶ Schiller, 1971a: 55.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid, 1990: 14.

(imperial, consular and magisterial) has been explained as emerging from official effigies (sacrae imagines).⁶¹⁸ Generally speaking, the Christian derivations had two iconographic variants: one in which Christ stands, as in the sixth-century apse mosaic at SS Cosmas and Damian in Rome (Fig. 5.15A); the other shows him enthroned, as in the roughly contemporary mosaics in San Vitale in Ravenna (Fig. 5.15B).⁶¹⁹ The *Majestas* panel and LoC Diptych both display the enthroned Christ (Fig. 5.16A-B), an image that was reproduced in various media from the seventh century. In Anglo-Saxon England, Hawkes has suggested that an enthroned version influenced the image of Christ ascending at Rothbury and those of Christ's Transfiguration and the *Traditio Legis cum Clavis* at Sandbach in the early ninth century (Fig. 5.17A, B),⁶²⁰ while several other examples show the same iconography, for example the dedication page of the New Minster Charter and the Christ in Majesty in the *Æthelstan Psalter*. The accompanying figures and details in the scheme varied considerably: in some cases Christ is accompanied by angels, in others by the evangelists and/or their symbols; in some cases he is surrounded by a mandorla, in others this is absent; sometimes it encloses only Christ, in others it incorporates the accompanying figures; sometimes he is bearded but in other instances he is youthful and clean-shaven. This latter type was intended to represent Christ's immortality while the bearded, mature type of *Majestas* was intended to illustrate his role as judge and ruler.⁶²¹

The image preserved on the *Majestas* ivory evidently depicts the youthful Christ seated, holding the Word in one hand and making a gesture of benediction with the other; the mandorla around him is supported by four nimbed angels, the lower pair supporting his feet and the upper pair presenting him, their hands protruding into the mandorla to do so. This is a distinctive arrangement, compared with the most common type of *Majestas* in a mandorla that associates Christ with the Evangelists. Where the angels are included, as in the Codex Amiatinus or in the ninth-century *Athelstan Psalter* (Fig. 5.18A-B), they do not interact with the body of Christ as intimately as on the *Majestas* and LoC ivories; one example where they do intrude/interact with the mandorla is found on the (arguably) contemporary Wirksworth slab (Fig. 5.19).⁶²² Here, seen in a large mandorla and bearing a

⁶¹⁸ Grabar, 1969: 77.

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid.*: 43.

⁶²⁰ Hawkes, 1995: 246-89.

⁶²¹ Grabar, 1969: 34.

⁶²² Hawkes, 1995: 246-90.

staff-cross, Christ is accompanied and carried to heaven by angels whilst being watched from below by the Virgin and another figure flanked by angels. The grip of the angels in the ivories and the Wirksworth slab is unusual and only featured in sixth-century Eastern contexts, like that on a Palestinian ampulla now at Monza (Fig. 5.7B).⁶²³

In the *Majestas* ivory (and likely the LoC, although the surface details are now lost), Christ holds a book, the significance of which, as at Wirksworth and Rothbury, points to the resurrection (with its redemptive qualities) and the Word fore-telling the Second Coming, presenting Christ overall as both Saviour and Judge. Also iconographically notable is the Greek cross with expanded arms on the book held by Christ in the *Majestas* ivory, which is repeated below the mandorla enclosing Christ on both ivories, and echoed above by the cross of Christ's halo in both instances. These distinctive elements strongly suggest references to the Crucifixion (at the base), to the witnessing of the salvatory effect of that sacrifice narrated in the Gospels (on Christ's knee), and to the resurrection possible through it (in Christ's halo). Moreover, the manner in which the angels support Christ and the mandorla recalls the relationship between angels and Christ in images of his Ascension, which were often adapted, as Hawkes has argued at Rothbury, to indicate the future Second Coming of the Judge at the end of time.⁶²⁴

With these specific frames of reference, and bearing in mind the fact that the *Majestas* panel's sides have been cut down, it is worth considering that the panel may originally have been surrounded by further panels decorated with small narrative scenes and/or accompanied by other figures supplementing the iconographic themes suggested by the (central) panel, as is the case with the LoC Diptych. Whether this is indeed the case, the iconographic details of the panel are in keeping with those circulating widely in Christian art from an early date, and which were current in Anglo-Saxon England between the seventh and ninth centuries. Details such as the pose of the angels and the cross/es further suggest the model on which it was based may well have been adapted for specific symbolic (iconographic) purposes.

⁶²³ Schiller, 1971b: pl. 460; Hawkes, 1995: 257.

⁶²⁴ Hawkes, 1992, 1996; see also DeWald, 1915; Deshman, 1997: 518-46.

The Virgin-Apostles panel, with its crowd of twelve half-length gesturing figures⁶²⁵ flanking a veiled orante figure standing between two candlesticks and four medallions containing busts of the evangelists seems to present an iconographic scheme unique in the extant corpus of Christian art of any period. The way in which the faces of the flanking figures – likely intended to depict the apostles – are turned upwards, however, suggests that the panel may originally have been part of a larger composition, the other parts of which have been lost.

The veiled aspect of the central orante might suggest a female figure, but the associated motifs (candlesticks, evangelist symbols and apostles) are not found together in early Christian images of the Virgin or other female figures; equally however, male orants are hard to explain in this setting. Nevertheless, the inclusion of the twelve apostolic figures, crowded together and gesturing upwards, does recall the attitude of the apostles in the iconography of the Ascension,⁶²⁶ and in many instances the Virgin was included centrally in their number. As early as the sixth century, she stands centrally, in the orans pose, among the apostles in the Rabbula Gospels (Fig. 5.20A), and centrally, although not as an orante, on a gold medallion struck c.600, possibly in Palestine (Fig. 5.21A), and a number of the early ampullae, such as that now in Cleveland (Fig. 5.21B).⁶²⁷

Her presence, particularly as an orante has a long history in early Christian art, emerging out of late antique representations of piety, or *pietas*, as seen by the central part of the third century Santa Maria Antiqua sarcophagus (Fig. 5.22), and is seen in frescos in many third and fourth-century catacombs, like the image of the three youths in the furnace at the Catacomb of Priscilla, or the multiple figures in the Catacombs of Saints Marcellinus and Peter (c.200-50; Fig. 5.23A,B).⁶²⁸ The figure thus developed from a symbol (piety) into a figure depicting action (prayer), and with these connotations it was adopted as a motif of the Virgin as an expression of her piety and submission to God's will as an instrument of the Incarnation.⁶²⁹ This gesture, and Mary's use of it, therefore signifies her role in the Incarnation, while acting as a reminder of the role of the Church in

⁶²⁵ One can be identified as Peter holding his keys (upper row, left-hand side), while Paul is likely the upper bearded figure on the right.

⁶²⁶ Acts 1.6-11; Luke 24.36-53; Mark 16.19-20; I Timothy 3.16; mention of his coming Ascension but no actual description of the event, is found in John 7.33, 16.28, 20.17.

⁶²⁷ See also Museo e Tesoro del Duomo, Monza: Bobbio 10.

⁶²⁸ Grabar, 1969: 75, figs 192, 193.

⁶²⁹ Ibid.: 76.

assuring perpetual prayer. The Virgin's stance in this case is therefore a *sacra imagine*, expressing her power and the victory (through her role as the Mother of God), of Christ's salvation, as well as and her eternal link between the sacred and human.

Despite the fact that the Virgin is not mentioned in any of the biblical accounts of the Ascension, she was clearly included in visual depictions of the event from an early date, and continued to be so through the ninth century with only few exceptions.⁶³⁰ She was, however, mentioned as present at the Descent of the Holy Spirit, recounted in Acts 1.14 ("All these were persevering with one mind in prayer with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren").⁶³¹ Interestingly, the iconography of the Ascension with the Virgin present is closely related to that of the Descent. Indeed, it has been suggested that the similarities were due to the Feast of the Ascension initially being celebrated the night before that of Pentecost.⁶³² While this might explain how the Virgin came to be included in the iconography of the Ascension, the ivory does not include the Holy Spirit (in the form of the Hand of God or a dove), nor the "tongues of flame" 'required' for a Pentecostal image. All such details are normally included in such scenes, seen in the Rabbula Gospels (Fig. 5.20B), or the ninth-century Carolingian San Paolo Bible where the Virgin sits enthroned among the apostles while Christ ascends above (Fig. 5.24).⁶³³ It could be argued that the flames were replaced by the two candlesticks flanking the central orante in the Virgin-Apostles ivory, but this would still argue against identification of the scene as the Descent of the Holy Spirit as the point of this episode was that *each* of the apostles was visited by the gift of speaking in tongues. The Ascension, however, symbolically referenced the Second Coming, and visions of Christ in Majesty included the four beasts of the heavenly throne, which were synonymous with the evangelist symbols, while images of the Second Coming, such as those set in the triumphal arches framing the apse mosaics of SS Cosmas and Damian or Sant' Apollinare in Classe,

⁶³⁰ Such as that at Rothbury where the group witnessing the ascent was, in any case, likely added to an image of Christ in Majesty to create the scene; Hawkes, 1996: 77-94.

⁶³¹ Acts 1.14: hii omnes erant perseverantes unanimiter in oratione cum mulieribus et Maria matre Iesu et fratribus eius.

⁶³² Baumstark, 1911; Pächt, Dodwell & Wormald, 1960: 68, n. 2; Collins, 2007: 42, n. 20.

⁶³³ Pächt, 1960: 68, n. 2; Collins, 2007: 42, n. 20.

include candelabra, denoting the churches addressed by John in the Book of Revelation.⁶³⁴ Thus, if the scheme depicted on the Virgin-Apostles ivory includes references to the Ascension, *imagines clipeatae* of the evangelist symbols and the candlesticks would not be iconographically irrelevant.

Given these associations and the fact that the Anglo-Saxon panel was likely once part of a larger overall scheme, it may be, therefore, that it represents a group originally set below an Ascension or *Majestas* image, and was integral to expressing the iconographic synergies between the two as seen in the LoC diptych. Whether this is indeed the case, the various elements in the image reflect knowledge of, and probably access to, early Christian depictions associated with the Ascension and Second Coming, which were also circulating in continental art in the eighth and ninth centuries; however as has been seen in the other early ivories, the combination of a variety of motifs that are not always in accordance with strict scriptural interpretation was a hallmark of Anglo-Saxon creativity.

The Baptism-Ascension ivory (cat. 11, Fig. 3.13A), presents its own set of iconographic questions due to the seemingly unique combination of iconographic elements as well as the loss of the upper half of the Ascension scene above; cutting down the upper register has resulted in the complete loss of Christ rising into heaven. The general iconography of the Ascension and Baptism appeared within the wider oeuvre of Christian art in the context of early Roman sarcophagi, with the Feast of the Ascension established c.380-430, something that may have inspired the c.400 Munich Ascension ivory (Fig. 5.25).⁶³⁵ Biblically, the Ascension is only recounted in Mark (16.19-20), Luke (24.50-53), and Acts (1.1-11), with the apocryphal gospels of Isaiah providing further details: Mark outlines the main event, Luke adds the account of the benediction and worshipful apostles,

⁶³⁴ Revelation 18.23: *angelo Ephesi ecclesiae scribe haec dicit qui tenet septem stellas in dextera sua qui ambulat in medio septem candelaborum aureorum*. For more on the beasts surrounding the throne of heaven see: O'Reilly, 1998; Brown, 1998.

⁶³⁵ The Feast of the Ascension was initially celebrated alongside Pentecostal commemoration, with early writers like Origen, Tertullian and Cyprian discussing only Easter and Pentecost. The Feast was likely established between c.380 and 430, with the *Peregrinatio Etheriae* (c.380) including an account of Ascension and Pentecostal vigils held in Bethlehem forty days after Easter, and 430 marking the death of Augustine who declared that the Ascension was a Feast universally observed. Dewald, 1915: 277-9; Hansen, 2011: 47; Ferguson, 2009: 123; see further discussion below, 211-12.

Acts describes the cloud and ‘two men in white’, while the apocryphal sources provide the setting of the Mount of Olives and the prostrate action of the disciples.⁶³⁶

The event was presented in Anglo-Saxon art and literature throughout the period,⁶³⁷ celebrated, for instance, in Bede’s hymn on the Ascension which refers to the gates of hell and heaven as boundaries crossed by Christ in the salvation of his entrance to heaven;⁶³⁸ Cynewulf’s *Christ II* (on the Ascension); and the later *Old English Martyrology* (*OEM*) and *Blickling Homily 11*, which focus on the footprints of Christ at the place of Ascension as symbols of Christ’s dual nature, human and divine, his physical absence but spiritual presence.⁶³⁹ The iconography of both the Baptism-Ascension panel and the LoC Diptych express wider concerns with the themes of witnessing (through the figures of the Virgin and apostles),⁶⁴⁰ and devotion to the Virgin.⁶⁴¹ Here, it is interesting to note that Mary is presented on the left of the scene in both cases, turning to the right and looking up (Fig. 5.26A,B); this is a distinct presentation: normally, she is depicted centrally and frontally, although one of the Palestinian ampullae now in the Cleveland Museum of Art shows her in semi-profile looking up at Christ (Fig. 5.21B). Whatever the nature of the source lying behind the Anglo-Saxon carvings, the effect is such that the Virgin is emphasised through her direct and animated relation with the ascending figure above.

As the Baptism is presented together with the Ascension on both ivories, being included without differentiation in the panel below the Ascension on the LoC diptych, it is important to consider why this association might have been made. The Baptism is recounted in the Synoptic Gospels, as well as being briefly mentioned in John’s gospel, and Paul’s letters to the Corinthians and Romans,⁶⁴² and was celebrated in the East as early as the third century, likely alongside the Adoration and the Nativity as an expression of the

⁶³⁶ See further, Dewald, 1915: 278.

⁶³⁷ For images, see e.g. the late eighth-century carvings at Wirksworth and Rothbury (Hawkes, 1995: 268; 1996: 81-4), and the tenth-century illustration in the Benedictional of Æthelwold (Deshman, 1997: 518-46).

⁶³⁸ Fraipont, 1955: 419-23; Kramer, 2014: 13.

⁶³⁹ Hofstetter, ASP, *Christ II*: website. Kramer (2014: 13, 15) argues that the extensive scholarship on *Christ II* has affected understanding of the Ascension in Anglo-Saxon literature; its importance here lies in its reflection of the visual material which indicates widespread awareness of the Ascension in Anglo-Saxon England, for which see further: Bede (Fraipont, 1955: 419-23; Lapidge, 1993: 10-12); the *OEM* (Rauer 2013), and the *Blickling Homilies* (Morris, 1880).

⁶⁴⁰ See e.g. Hansen, 2011: 47, 61.

⁶⁴¹ See below, Section 5.3b.

⁶⁴² Matthew 3.13-17; Mark 1.9-11; Luke 3.21; John 1.26-36, 3.5; Romans 6.3; I Corinthians: 10.1-4.

revelation of God Incarnate.⁶⁴³ It came to be regarded, however, not only as a theophany, but also as a reference to Christ's passion, death and resurrection. In this respect it complements the Ascension which also functioned as a demonstration of Christ's triumph over death: his resurrection and ascension into heaven demonstrate his divine aspect as the Son of God. Setting the Baptism immediately below the Ascension therefore, acts as a reminder of the Father's affirmation of his Son's divinity heard at the time, something that is confirmed by Christ's ascent into Heaven in human form.

While depictions of the Baptism can be seen as early as the third century in the West,⁶⁴⁴ it is the eastern type that the ivory images follow, with the earliest such images dating from the sixth century. It shows Christ as a youth, usually standing up to his waist in transparent water, as seen the miniature in the Rabbula gospels (Fig. 5.20C), with an attendant angel, as in the Palestinian painted wooden reliquary in the Vatican (Fig. 5.8). The Baptisms in the Baptism-Ascension and LoC ivories both depict the youthful Christ (Fig. 5.27A,B) – the silhouette of the LoC Diptych preserves what looks to be the clean-shaven aspect of the face – but unlike these eastern versions, the two Anglo-Saxon ivories include the rare iconographic device of the baptismal tub (or font), seen in other ivories of the same period: in the lower register of the late ninth-century Clovis ivory (Fig. 5.27C), and in the upper register of an *c.*900 ivory panel at the British Museum (Fig. 5.27D). This makes clear the liturgical understanding that the ritual of baptism was deemed to have been instituted in Christ's baptism in the River Jordan, and that each participation in the ritual functions as an act of *imitatio Christi*, enabling incorporation into the community of faithful Christians.⁶⁴⁵

Last Judgement

The Last Judgement ivory (cat. 7; Fig. 3.11A) presents a complex set of iconographic meanings with little (apparent) iconographic source material from which it could have taken its inspiration. It is divided into three notional registers: in the uppermost Christ sits in a mandorla holding a scroll in each hand, flanked by six angels blowing trumpets: the scroll in his right hand still contains an inscription “VENITE BEN[edicti p]ATR[is] / MEI

⁶⁴³ Schiller, 1971a: 127.

⁶⁴⁴ See Ferguson, 2009: 123-31. For further discussion of this type see below, 205.

⁶⁴⁵ For the extensive literature on the subject of baptism in the early Church, see e.g. Bundy, 1927; Best, 1960; Swayne, 1970; Jensen, 2012.

P(er)CIPIT[E REGNUM] VO(bis)” and it is assumed that the other scroll would have held the words of Christ to the Damned: “DISCEDETE A ME MALEDICTI IN IGNEM AETERNUM”, both *sententia* recited during the liturgy of the dead.⁶⁴⁶ By means of these scrolls, the two caskets and the figure of the Archangel Michael standing on a crescent are connected, with Christ’s foot resting on Michael’s head while doves (representing souls) awaken the bodies in four sarcophagi. The lowermost register is divided in half vertically with the blessed being welcomed into the heavenly Jerusalem by an angel on the left, and the naked and cowering damned being devoured by the mouth of Hell on the right.

The general imagery and iconography of the Last Judgement emerged during the fourth to ninth centuries, based largely on the Book of Revelation, with any early artists creating quite literal representations of the account – to the extent that Hawkes observed in her study of the art of damnation in Anglo-Saxon England that the iconographic literalness of the Anglo-Saxon scenes (including that of the Last Judgement ivory) “may well be regarded as innovative” and suggestive of production at a time “before the iconographic conventions of such schemes had become established”.⁶⁴⁷

Pamela Sheingorn and Meg Boulton have also pointed to the innovative nature of the arrangement of the ivory scheme, with Sheingorn highlighting the symmetrical triangle formed between Christ and the resurrected figures below by means of the two scrolls extending from his hands.⁶⁴⁸ She goes on to describe how this overlaps “a series of horizontal zones or bands that can be read sequentially from top to bottom” to create an overall symmetry that she considered points to the composition of the scheme in keeping with the narrative of the Last Judgement as an event completing the history of Christian salvation “so successfully that it [was] to remain in use for representations of the Last Judgement from the ninth century through the end of the Middle Ages”.⁶⁴⁹ Boulton, on the other hand, focussed on the relation between the upper triangle and that below, created by the archangel standing on the crescent moon, and the apparent disjuncture with the

⁶⁴⁶ “Come, blessed of my father, be gathered into your kingdom” and “Descend now quickly, you accursed, into the house of pain; I know you not”; see further Maddern, 2013; Boulton, 2013: 279-90. According to Williamson (2010: 152, cat. 46), the inscription relating to the Damned was removed at the time of the plaque’s later reuse.

⁶⁴⁷ Hawkes, 2011: 230-42, 374-79.

⁶⁴⁸ Sheingorn, 1985: 26.

⁶⁴⁹ *Ibid.*: 26.

arrangement of the lower register, which she argues actively articulates the temporal disruption heralded by the Last Judgement when time ceases to exist.⁶⁵⁰

Whether this is indeed the case, the motif of the Damned herded, naked and cowering, into the mouth of Hell depicted as the jaws of a devouring monster is also considered iconographically distinctive. It is generally accepted this motif was developed in Anglo-Saxon England, perhaps inspired by texts such as Gregory the Great's *Moralia*,⁶⁵¹ although Galpern and Brenk have suggested that the iconography has Ottonian or Byzantine origins.⁶⁵² Schmidt disagreed, seeing it as "a distinctly Anglo-Saxon addition", but one that "serves no purpose other than a decorative and attractive (in that it draws the viewer's attention) image of an active tormentor inflicting itself upon an inactive receiver".⁶⁵³ Nonetheless, Hell itself was depicted in many different ways at this time,⁶⁵⁴ suggesting that it was far from "essentially decorative".⁶⁵⁵ Schapiro likewise considered the Hell mouth to have symbolic significance – in keeping with Anglo-Saxon militaristic taste as well as referring to the pagan myth of the 'Crack of Doom', in which Odin battles a wolf and is devoured before being saved by his son Vidar, who breaks open the wolf's great jaws, and who is later identified with Christ.⁶⁵⁶ While later than the proposed c. 800 dating of this ivory, the Old English poem known as *Christ III* (or *Judgement Day*), preserved in the Exeter Book is relevant here. Tentatively attributed to Cynewulf and so dated to the mid ninth century,⁶⁵⁷ the poem provides a detailed account of the Last Judgement that, possibly reflecting a longer-standing oral tradition as well as biblical and exegetical accounts, recalls details depicted in the ivory.⁶⁵⁸

If such a poem was known to the artist who created the Last Judgement ivory, Cynewulf's work suggests that by the ninth century the biblical accounts of the Last Judgement were familiar within Anglo-Saxon England, and the apparently unique arrangement and iconographic details of the scheme featured on the ivory are in keeping with the textual accounts, biblical and otherwise, that survive from the region at this time.

⁶⁵⁰ Boulton, forthcoming.

⁶⁵¹ Sheingorn, 1985: 26.

⁶⁵² Galpern 1977: 133-36; Brenk, 1966: 118-20.

⁶⁵³ Schmidt, 1995: 64.

⁶⁵⁴ Hawkes, 2011: 230-42, 374-79; Schmidt 1995: 64-5.

⁶⁵⁵ See also Schapiro, 1980: 257-9, n. 66.

⁶⁵⁶ Schapiro, 1980: 257-9, note 66.

⁶⁵⁷ For more see, Bjork, 2013.

⁶⁵⁸ See for e.g.: Hostetter, ASP: *Christ III* 1:11-14, 19-22, 62-71, 4:15-20, 21-31, 49-50, & 7:18-19.

The depiction of the entry to Hell as a monstrous mouth reveals that active choices were being made by those responsible for the design of this ivory – choices that, in keeping with the contemporary literature,⁶⁵⁹ sought to maximise the visceral nature of eternal damnation.

The Zoomorphic panel (cat. 8, Fig. 3.12A), although not presenting any figural carving, is important in terms of this iconographic discussion due to its link to the Last Judgement ivory.⁶⁶⁰ These comments are speculative, however, they do give rise to interesting questions surrounding the purpose and meaning behind the panel's creation and decoration in terms of spatial awareness. While zoomorphic decoration in Anglo-Saxon England is a topic well rehearsed in terms of stylistic and iconographic analysis,⁶⁶¹ the implications of this specific array of living vine scroll is its connection (physically and iconographically) with the motif of the Last Judgement/Christ in Majesty scheme on the Last Judgement ivory. The depiction of two birds and two harts in the main frame of the Zoomorphic panel is likely a reference to the Tree (or Font) of Life, so illustrated on the Baptismal font at Stobi (Fig. 5.28A), in the Godescalc Gospels (Fig. 5.29A) and later in the ninth century, in the Gospel book of St Médard of Soisson (5.29B). In Anglo-Saxon England, the same thematic motifs can be seen in the Book of Kells, where two birds are seen above Christ's head (Fig. 5.28B) and on the Easby cross and Jedburgh stone fragment (Fig. 4.56 & 4.80) among others. Interestingly, it is these crosses, and the Anglo-Saxon predilections for creating monumental figural imagery flanked (in 3D on the sides of the cross shafts) by zoomorphic vine scroll, that connects these two panels beyond mere stylistic and iconographic terms.

When considering the Last Judgement and Zoomorphic panels, this same effect is seen; while the two ivory panels were likely not intended to act (or be displayed) as part of a miniature cross shaft, their iconographic schemes nevertheless imitate those seen in stone. In addition, their physical dimensions and the evidence of nearly identical drilling and reshaping for multiple uses suggests that their original intent was to be made (and kept) together. Admittedly, this suggestion of imitating cross shafts is deviating from the norm, however it is the opinion of this study that the ivories of Anglo-Saxon England are

⁶⁵⁹ See further, e.g. Hostetter, ASP: *Christ III*; Hawkes, 2011; Bjork, 2013; Foxhall-Forbes, 2013.

⁶⁶⁰ It is also linked stylistically, through its verso carved reliefs and size. For more see above, Chapter 4, and catalogue entries for each ivory in vol. II.

⁶⁶¹ For more see: Hines, 2003; Karkov, 2011; Webster, 2012a.

more than the suggested ('poor') copies of Continental art; instead, they rather imitate and demonstrate complex and evolving decisions surrounding localised artistic centres which had knowledge (but not necessarily the compunction to follow) motifs from elsewhere in early medieval Europe.

5.2b The Mid Ninth and Tenth Centuries

The Baptism of Christ

As noted above, the Baptism of Christ, is described by the Synoptic Gospels as well as John, Romans and Corinthians,⁶⁶² unlike cat. 11, this Baptism ivory (cat. 17, Fig. 5.30) seems to have been based on the Western type which shows Christ as a child standing in the Jordan in a frontal pose, with John the Baptist laying a hand on his head while the dove of the Holy Spirit descends from heaven: the earliest known version of this type is preserved in the third-century Crypt of Lucina at the entrance to the Catacombs of St Calixtus (Fig. 5.31A);⁶⁶³ a fourth-century fresco from the catacombs of SS Pietro e Marcellino provides a further example (Fig. 5.31B).⁶⁶⁴

Within Anglo-Saxon art there are few extant images of the Baptism before the ninth century,⁶⁶⁵ although as one of the two sacraments of initiation practised in the early Church it was of course central to Christian doctrine and considered as such in Anglo-Saxon England.⁶⁶⁶ As has often been noted the Benedictional of Æthelwold, dated to 963-984, includes a full page illustration of the subject (Fig. 5.32A), and it is with this that the ivory can be most suitably compared, although the trimming of extra material from the Baptism ivory leaves little to better situate this ivory iconographically. There is nevertheless one small detail that is worth considering: the girdle of John the Baptist. As argued by Deshman, there is little in the Benedictional illumination that does not reveal Carolingian influence,⁶⁶⁷ however, the knotted girdle wrapped around the Baptist's waist is an apparently Anglo-Saxon addition. It is found elsewhere only in the Drogo Sacramentary

⁶⁶² See above, n. 681.

⁶⁶³ Schiller, 1971a: I, 132, fig. 346

⁶⁶⁴ For more detailed discussion, see Schiller, 1971a: 135.

⁶⁶⁵ See vol. II, cat. 11, 12, 17.

⁶⁶⁶ On the baptism in the early Church see, Ferguson, 2009; Sonne de Torrens & Torrens, 2013a; for Anglo-Saxon England see, Barnwell, 2014; see further, Bede *Hom 23*, Martin & Hurst, 1991: CCSL 122, 354, 356-357; John the Baptist's prayer, in the style of Cynewulf, Rambaran-Olm, 2014; Maxwell, 1981: 600-6.

⁶⁶⁷ Deshman, 1995: 45.

in a miniature likely “added by Winchester painters” (Fig. 5.33A), which shows a “prominent”, but different knot.⁶⁶⁸

The girdle was understood to be a vestment that represented those who removed their sins through penitence, and as such, acted as a theological tool used by Bede who connected it to the Pauline concept of liturgical baptism as a mystic death and resurrection of Christ, who was often portrayed wearing a loincloth with a knotted girdle.⁶⁶⁹ Deshman has argued that Bede’s commentary on the Pauline epistle was owned by Æthelwold,⁶⁷⁰ and that the illuminators of the Benedictional, inspired by the commentary, referenced it in the iconography of the Baptism scene: the girdle in the Benedictional therefore indicates that the ascetic John “was a figure of the crucified Christ in a loincloth and of those who had baptismally shared Christ’s death and resurrection, thereby clothing themselves in his garment of purity.”⁶⁷¹ The ivory likewise, while not showing such a prominent, and physically differentiated, girdle wrapped around the Baptist’s waist, nevertheless shows a prominent object held in John’s left hand that could well be identified as a knotted piece of fabric; it was certainly deemed sufficiently significant to retain despite the trimming of the ivory.⁶⁷²

The material gathered in the Baptist’s hand in the Anglo-Saxon ivory is a feature found elsewhere in early Christian art: the sixth-century Syrian Baptism ivory in the British Museum shows a defined bunch of material in the Baptist’s hand (Fig. 5.34A), and the late ninth-century Brunswick Casket depicts the Baptist’s hand gathering the cloth in one hand (Fig. 5.34B). Interestingly, according to the apocryphal legend *Vita Ioannis Baptistae*, written by the Egyptian Bishop Serapion in c.385-95, John the Baptist was ordained a priest by his father before retiring into the wilderness and therefore is sometimes shown wearing priestly garb instead of the skins of a hermit.⁶⁷³ The grabbing of the material in such a manner as shown in the Anglo-Saxon ivory, likely therefore referenced the legend of John being ordained (as demonstrated by his robes, rather than

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid: 48.

⁶⁶⁹ Martin & Hurst, 1991: 1, 1, 5; Deshman, 1995: 49, 50.

⁶⁷⁰ Lapidge, 1985: 53, no. 2; Deshman, 1995: 49.

⁶⁷¹ Deshman, 1995: 49.

⁶⁷² I am grateful to Carolyn Twomey for extended discussion on this topic as well as the images she has shared with me.

⁶⁷³ Sonne de Torrens, 2013a: 66.

skins), and while this legend may not have been known in Anglo-Saxon England, the potential reference to the Baptist as signifying priestly office is not impossible.

The Nativity

The iconography of the Nativity panel (cat. 16, Fig. 2.4), like all such schemes, is based on the biblical accounts of Luke 2.1-20 and Matthew 1.18-2.12. The earliest extant schemes are preserved on fourth-century sarcophagi in Rome and Gaul, with varying numbers of figures included alongside the Child in the manger (Fig. 5.35A).⁶⁷⁴ Among these the ox and ass were always present, even when Mary, or any other human figure, was not, as in the c.385 Stilicone sarcophagus held in Milan (Fig. 5.35B). Their presence alluded to Isaiah's prophecy that the Messiah would be known between the ox and ass, and was highlighted early in the exegetical tradition, with Origen's *Homilies* on Luke, written in the third century, likening the rebellion in Israel (described in Isaiah 1:3) as the Bethlehem manger, the ox as the 'pure' animal and the ass as 'impure'. Although Origen's text was not widely circulated in the early medieval world, other exegetes continued the tradition, with Ambrose and Augustine identifying the ox as a symbol of the chosen Jewish people and the ass as the symbol of the heathens, and Gregory of Nazianzus in the fourth century describing the Christ Child as lying between the ox (yoked to the Law, being the Jews) and the ass (loaded with sins and idolatry, being the Heathens) and being brought into the world to bring freedom from both burdens.⁶⁷⁵

Until the declaration of the Council of Ephesus (431) that the Virgin was the Mother of God, neither the Virgin nor Joseph appeared in the scene regularly;⁶⁷⁶ her presence in Nativity scenes became more established in the late fifth century, bringing about a theological, liturgical and artistic cohesiveness that was expressed with her becoming the second focal point in the iconography of the Nativity.⁶⁷⁷ It was in the sixth century in the East, particularly in Palestine, that the scheme featured on the Nativity ivory came to be established, with the Virgin reclining on a couch (*kline*) and the manger placed on a stone altar, while Joseph sat with his head resting in his hand, as shown the sixth-century throne of Maximian (Fig. 2.1B), or the lower register of the (sixth century) ivory

⁶⁷⁴ Schiller, 1971: 59.

⁶⁷⁵ Schiller, 1971: 61; Hawkes, 1989, 2002.

⁶⁷⁶ Schiller, 1971: 60.

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid.*: 61.

book-cover held at the University of Manchester Library (Fig. 5.36). The midwife included in the Anglo-Saxon ivory derives from the account in the *Protevangelium of James* (dated to the second century) but was also mentioned in the later *Pseudo-Matthew*, Latin translations of which appeared between the eighth and ninth centuries.⁶⁷⁸

In Anglo-Saxon art, the iconographic version of the Nativity featured on the ivory is also illustrated in the Benedictional of Æthelwold. Deemed by Deshman to derive from a Metz school model, he concentrated on the numerous iconographic anomalies that he considered made the illumination (and by association, the ivory), Anglo-Saxon. The midwife is present, but neither the *Protoevangelium* nor the *Pseudo-Matthew* describes her fixing the pillow behind the Virgin, and Schapiro long ago suggested that this was an Anglo-Saxon addition, saying that it was in keeping with the “distinctive and precocious tendency of Anglo-Saxon illuminators to invest traditional religious themes with fresh naturalistic details drawn from their personal experience of the real world.”⁶⁷⁹ The ivory also presents the manger on a rocky outcrop, a sixth-century Eastern motif taken from early textual traditions, and was likely intended to reference contemporary practices where cellars and stables were not made of wood, but hewn out of the rocks under houses while caves and grottos provided shelter⁶⁸⁰ This might demonstrate that access to an iconographic type of sixth century Eastern origin lies behind the ivory. Overall, the iconographic import of the scene, as elucidated by Deshman in relation to the Benedictional image, highlights the Eucharistic associations with the Nativity long established in the literature on the subject.⁶⁸¹

Transfiguration

The Transfiguration panel (cat. 13, Fig. 3.11B) presents a scheme not frequently depicted in Christian art before the twelfth century, and seems to have been composed from details found in early Christian versions of Christ in Majesty. The biblical account of the event is found in Matthew 17.1-9, Mark 9.2-9 and Luke 9.28-36, and describes the transformed shining figure of Christ and the appearance of Moses and Elijah in the presence of three

⁶⁷⁸ The midwife is named ‘Zelomi’ in the *Pseudo-Matthew*; she appears in the *PoJ* 19, 384; Schiller, 1971: 63-4; Deshman, 1995: 18.

⁶⁷⁹ Schapiro, 1943: 281; Deshman, 1995: 19.

⁶⁸⁰ Schiller, 1971: 62;

⁶⁸¹ For further discussion, see e.g. Hawkes, 2002a: 29.

apostles (James, John and Peter) whose reactions to the revelation are described in varying ways: in Matthew, they “fell on their face, and were sore afraid”; in Mark, Peter reacts before the actual Transfiguration with a sense of foreboding saying “he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid”; and in Luke “Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him”.⁶⁸² Liturgically, the event was celebrated from the early sixth century in the East as one of the Feasts of the Church and seems to have been common by the ninth century, but it was not fully recognised in the West until 1475.⁶⁸³ Despite this, early exegetes took a special interest in the episode, considering it to be the final theophany of Christ’s divine nature prior to his resurrection.⁶⁸⁴ Such concerns were based on earlier theological controversies of the fourth century when the Transfiguration was considered a vital piece of evidence for Christ’s divine nature. John Chrysostom (344-407), for instance, had interpreted the event as a precursor to the *parusia*, Christ’s return as Judge, referring specifically to Matthew 16.27 as the basis for his interpretation.⁶⁸⁵ Jerome (c.347-420), a contemporary of Leo I, focused on the light that radiated from Christ’s face and body, suggesting that his entire being had been transformed into light and the bright cloud was a manifestation of the Holy Ghost.⁶⁸⁶ Later, John of Damascus (700-50) discussed the event, casting aside any connection with the light of the sun, arguing that this would be insufficient, as “the uncreated reality of the divine could not be expressed by an image of a created body.”⁶⁸⁷

Notwithstanding such interest, the Transfiguration was not depicted in Christian art until the mid-sixth century when it was included in two very different apse mosaic programmes: at Sant’ Apollinare in Classe (Fig. 5.37A) and at the Church of the Transfiguration in the monastery on Sinai (Fig. 5.37B), the former of which presents the Transfiguration symbolically while the latter does so more literally in keeping with the biblical narrative.⁶⁸⁸ Following this, the scheme did not feature with any great regularity, although Hawkes has argued that, in keeping with Carolingian developments, it was

⁶⁸² See Schiller 1971a: 145.

⁶⁸³ Ibid.: 146.

⁶⁸⁴ Migne, 1878-90: vol. 54, 425-6; Schiller, 1971a: 147.

⁶⁸⁵ Migne, 1857-66: vol. 58, 554.

⁶⁸⁶ Schiller 1971a: 146

⁶⁸⁷ Migne, 1857-66: vol. 96, 565; Schiller, 1971a: 147.

⁶⁸⁸ See further, e.g.: Schiller, 1971a: 148; Spieser, 1998: 63-73; Jenson, 2000: 94-129.

included on the early and mid ninth-century crosses at Sandbach where it may have been devised from a *Majestas* scheme specifically for the monuments.⁶⁸⁹

The scheme depicted on the ivory is divided into three zones, with the uppermost being the largest, featuring Christ, flanked by Moses and Elijah who gesture to him in conversation. Christ is identified by a cruciform halo and surrounded by a decorative double mandorla: one encircling his feet and ankles; the other larger one circumscribing the rest of his body. Highlighted in this way Christ stands, below the hand of God descending from the clouds, on a ground that is indeterminably both clouds and Mt Tabor, that serves to separate him from the earthly figures set in the register below – depicting the disciples, whose bodies are contorted, signifying their fear. The central figure, likely Peter, looks up at the scene above him, leaning back on his haunches and gesturing in speech; the two figures flanking him cower, or perhaps sleep. Above them, in the middle register, are three small architectural structures and a single tree standing on a ground similarly ambiguous to that on which Christ, Moses and Elijah stand. To this extent the ivory provides a fairly ‘accurate’ depiction of the biblical accounts of the Transfiguration, with the tabernacles, proposed to commemorate the event in its aftermath,⁶⁹⁰ being placed in the middle ground, temporally ambiguous in relation to the contemporaneity of the transfiguration and those witnessing it.

Regardless of this, the ivory panel represents the major theological issues surrounding the biblical accounts: Leo I’s declaration that the Transfiguration verifies Christ’s divine nature on the authority of the Council of Nicaea, is likely signified by the nimbed cruciform halo and the double mandorla familiar in the iconography of the *Majestas*; the double mandorla also serves to reference the preoccupation with the light that radiated from Christ’s body. The synoptic gospels’ description of the prostrate and fearful disciples presented in the ivory presents the attitude deemed appropriate for those confronted by the divine in all its glory. In the light of this, it seems not unlikely that this specific scene may well have been added to the back of a Last Judgement scene on the understanding that the two were linked by the idea of Christ’s continuing transformations as divine, sacrificial lamb, saviour, and judge, something that could only be emphasised by the addition of the Transfiguration.

⁶⁸⁹ Hawkes, 2002a: 103.

⁶⁹⁰ Matthew 17.4.

Ascension

Iconographically, the Ascension panel (cat. 14, Fig. 3.12B) is of a type suggested by Dewald to have been inspired by early Roman depictions of the apotheoses of emperors, which depicted a central figure being assisted or striding into heaven while groups of figures look on, as on the early fifth-century Consecratio ivory panel at the British Museum (Fig. 5.38).⁶⁹¹ Later Christian types follow this trend, both within Anglo-Saxon England and continental artistic centres: the Drogo Sacramentary includes one example (Fig. 5.33B), and the Benedictional of Æthelwold illustrates another nearly identical scheme to that found in the ivory (Fig. 5.32B). Given these comparisons Deshman's study of the manuscript provides useful insight into the iconography of the ivory, with both objects displaying the additional use of motifs associated with the Eastern and Western iconographic types: the striding figure of the Western type has been placed in the mandorla associated with the Eastern type, but the figure reaches outside it in a manner that Deshman has interpreted as highlighting both his humanity and holy purpose, the latter emphasised by the rays emanating from the mandorla, which recall the "shining resplendently" of Cynewulf's *Christ II/Ascension* poem,⁶⁹² and the "sun of righteousness" and "light of the world" invoked by Bede in his homily on the subject.⁶⁹³ The addition of full-length angels who bow to Christ are a further 'Eastern' feature incorporated into the overall Western iconographic type of the Ascension.⁶⁹⁴ The central figure of the orante Virgin, with her upturned face and widely gesturing hands is also in keeping with the Eastern type, as is the jumbled, agitated group of eleven apostles⁶⁹⁵ and the olive trees.

One of the most notable aspects of the ivory is the action of Christ and his immediate surroundings: namely, the ground under Christ's feet, his unaided ascension, and the 'clouds' surrounding him. Analysis of the under-painting of the Benedictional

⁶⁹¹ See further, Grabar, 1969; MacCormick, 1981; Kiilerich, 2012.

⁶⁹² Hofstetter, ASP, *Christ II*: website.

⁶⁹³ Bede, *Hom. 2*, 15 (Martin & Hurst, 1991: 144). Bede's cites Malachi 4:2 and John 8:12 respectively. While a 'typically' Anglo-Saxon motif, they were not the first to illuminate the rays emanating from the mandorla; it can be found on a ninth- or tenth-century icon at Mt Sinai (Fig. 5.53B). Deshman, 1995: 59.

⁶⁹⁴ Deshman argues that the full-length angel is a Carolingian/Byzantine feature, but acknowledges that the Galba Psalter and the Benedictional of Æthelwold show half-length angels flanking the ascending Christ. Deshman, 1995: 59.

⁶⁹⁵ The presence of eleven apostles is canonically accurate, but includes the Virgin who was not actually present according to Scripture.

shows that the illuminators had originally placed Christ in the middle of the sky, but later changed it to depict him ‘leaping’ off a hill into the sky, reflecting a modification of the image in keeping with the Song of Songs (2.8),⁶⁹⁶ where Christ is likened to the ‘beloved’ powerfully skipping over the hills.⁶⁹⁷ The angels flanking the mandorla, but having no physical contact with it or Christ, further reflect textual traditions, articulated by Gregory the Great and later Anglo-Saxon and Carolingian writers who insisted that he ascended unaided by the angels, with Bede declaring that the angels did nothing but pay him homage.⁶⁹⁸ The importance of this independent ascension lay in the understanding that Christ rose unaided due to his divine omnipotence and unstained human nature, not weighed down by original sin.⁶⁹⁹ Like the Benedictional, the Anglo-Saxon ivory shows Christ ascending unaided.

The focus on the clouds surrounding Christ in both the manuscript and ivory stems from Acts 1.9, which Gregory interpreted as Christ’s chariot to heaven,⁷⁰⁰ but Bede expanded on this, explaining that the cloud represented the humanity in Christ, “in which he dressed himself during the Incarnation so that mankind could tolerate the light of his divinity and yet receive its illumination.”⁷⁰¹ In the late tenth century both Ælfric and the Blickling homilist explained that the clouds did not support Christ, but rather followed or went with him to heaven.⁷⁰²

It would seem therefore, that the iconography of the Ascension ivory displays a scheme based on early Western and Eastern iconographic types, which has been a practice found elsewhere in tenth-century Anglo-Saxon art, such as the Benedictional, dependent on the rather literal interpretation of Anglo-Saxon exegesis current from the eighth

⁶⁹⁶ Song of Songs 2.8: *vox dilecti mei ecce iste venit saliens in montibus transiliens colles*. (“The voice of my beloved, behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping over the hills.”)

⁶⁹⁷ Dushman, 1995: 60.

⁶⁹⁸ Gregory *Homilia* 29 (*PL* 76, cols. 1216c-1217c); Haymo of Auxerre *Homilia* 96 (*PL* 118, col. 547B-D); Bede *Hom.* 2, 115 (Martin & Hurst, 1991: 146); Ælfric *Homilia* 1 (Thorpe, 1844: 306); There are some earlier Western images that show the angels assisting Christ as well as a hand reaching down from heaven (with varying degrees of physical contact with Christ’s hand) to aid in his ascension, like that seen in the Drogo Sacramentary, fol. 71v. See further Brendel, 1944: 12; Dushman, 1995: 61.

⁶⁹⁹ Dushman, 1995: 61.

⁷⁰⁰ Blume & Dreves, 1908: 110, no. 102; Dushman, 1995: 61.

⁷⁰¹ Dushman, 1995: 61; Bede *Homilia* 2, 15 (Martin & Hurst, 1991: 142); Bede’s commentary is based on Augustine’s *Enarrationes* 88, 1, 9 (Dekkers & Fraipont, 1956: 1226).

⁷⁰² Thorpe, 1844: I, 299; Morris, 1880: 120-21; Dushman, 1995: 62.

century.⁷⁰³ The clear use of both Eastern and Western types in the Anglo-Saxon ivory, and the apparently conscious decision to reflect canonical, and Anglo-Saxon exegetica, presents evidence that the artist, and likely its patron, were well aware of current Anglo-Saxon exegetical and liturgical material, as well as Western and Eastern motifs circulating at the time, and combined such knowledge in the depiction on this ivory.

Entry to Jerusalem and Christ in the House of Simon

The ivory depicting the Entry into Jerusalem and Christ in the House of Simon (cat. 15, Fig. 3.13B) on the reverse of the Baptism-Ascension panel, is difficult to identify as specifically Anglo-Saxon and most scholars have considered this re-carving as emerging from stylistic traditions found at Metz.⁷⁰⁴ The Entry, carved into the upper register, presents aspects of the episode recounted in all four gospels, establishing a connection between them and the Old Testament prophecies of Zechariah,⁷⁰⁵ with the depiction of palm branches held by the spectators along the route, symbols of victory in antiquity, and the spreading of garments before Jesus, understood to honour the anointed king (II Kings 9.13).

The earliest representations of the Entry date to the fourth century and were influenced not only by the liturgy of Palm Sunday (celebrated with processions in Jerusalem by the fourth century and from the seventh century in the West),⁷⁰⁶ but also by the symbolic status of the city of Jerusalem itself.⁷⁰⁷ The event was understood to function as an *adventus*, prefiguring Christ's entry into the heavenly Jerusalem;⁷⁰⁸ his entry into the city of heaven represented his triumph over death, and in early Christian art the image of the Entry was often paired with images of Daniel in the Lion's Den, the Fall, and the

⁷⁰³ Bede *Homilia* 2, 15 (Martin & Hurst, 1991: 142); Dëshman, 1995: 62.

⁷⁰⁴ Beckwith (1972: 119, cat. 5) even states that it was carved "in the School of Metz about the third quarter of the ninth century"; Longhurst (1927: 34, 68, pl. XLVII) deems it "Carolingian (Metz group); ninth or tenth century". See also Goldschmidt, 1914: I cat. 107, pl. XLIX and discussion in Chapter 4.

⁷⁰⁵ Matthew 21.1-11; Mark 11.1-10; Luke 19.29-40; John 12.12-19; Zechariah 9.9; Isaiah 62.10.

⁷⁰⁶ Schiller, 1968: 18; Young, 1951: I, 86, 90.

⁷⁰⁷ Krautheimer, 1983; Kühnel, 1987, 2003; Boulton, 2013, forthcoming (2016).

⁷⁰⁸ Schiller, 1971a: 118; Dëshman, 1997; see Hawkes, 2015 [Transitions vol].

Raising of the Widow's Son at Nain – all images designed to signify Christ's salvation overcoming death, and the possibility of resurrection (entry) into eternal life.⁷⁰⁹

The fifth century saw the beginning of the iconographic type featured on the ivory: a disciple (or two) follows Christ holding palm branches, who is identified by a cruciform halo and rides a donkey while gesturing in speech towards the approaching crowd, depicted as two (or three) figures who walk towards Christ from the right bearing palm branches while two others spread their cloaks on the ground.⁷¹⁰ Notably, as Christ does not ride side-saddle, a detail typical of all eastern renderings,⁷¹¹ this strongly indicates that the model type lying behind the ivory is one that emerged out of an iconographic tradition common in Christian art across western Europe: it is included in one of the five panels of the fifth-century ivory diptych in Milan (Fig. 5.39A); it is part of a narrative illumination in the Augustine Gospels (Fig. 5.41A); it can also be found within an initial in the Drogo Sacramentary (Fig. 5.33B); as well as another *c.*900-25 ivory from Milan, now held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Fig. 5.42).

Within Anglo-Saxon art of the later ninth and tenth centuries the Benedictional of Æthelwold again provides a clear parallel, which in the absence of other examples from the region, has significant implications for consideration of the iconographic scheme of the ivory (Fig. 5.32C).⁷¹² The manuscript shows several figures following and surrounding a young Christ, waving palm branches and flowers, while he rides on a donkey over the cloaks of two figures before him. The illumination benefits from a larger area in which to include greater contextual detail, but the main iconographic elements of the procession are common to both images; indeed, so close is the relationship between the two that Deshman has suggested that the palm and trefoil 'flowers' held among the figures within the Benedictional came from the ivory, rather than the other way around, adding that the scheme was likely inspired by an ultimately Eastern source, such as that preserved in the

⁷⁰⁹ Schiller, 1968: 19. See the lower register of reliefs on the Roman sarcophagus of Adelfia, *c.*340-5.

⁷¹⁰ See e.g. the ivory plaque in five panels, Milan Cathedral Treasury, second half of the fifth century, Ravenna or North Italy (Fig. 5.55A); and the marble fragment, Church of San Giovanni di Studio in Constantinople, fifth century (Fig. 5.55B). Talbot Rice: 1959, fig. 16; Schiller, 1972: II, 19, I, fig. 53).

⁷¹¹ Schiller, 1972: 20. For example, see the late-ninth century *Homilies* of Gregory of Nazianzus (Fig. 5.56A) or the tenth-century ivory held at the Bode Museum in Berlin (Fig. 5.56B).

⁷¹² The only other example of the Entry into Jerusalem is that found on the end of the boxwood casket held in the Cleveland Museum of Art, dated to *c.*1050 (Fig. 5.58B).

sixth-century Rossano Gospels (Fig. 5.43), which was still current in tenth-century Byzantine art.⁷¹³ By this time the event and its Feast were important within the Anglo-Saxon liturgical year, with the liturgy for Palm Sunday describing a crowd greeting Christ with palms and flowers,⁷¹⁴ Ælfric explaining the group going before Christ as the Old Testament Jews and those following Christ as the Gentiles, or present day believers.⁷¹⁵

The lower register of the panel features Christ in the House of Simon, an episode found in all four gospels which records Christ's visit to the home of a leper in Bethany where he and his disciples were fed and Christ was anointed with costly oil.⁷¹⁶ The ivory seems to depict the moment of the anointing, incurring outrage among the disciples, a response portrayed in their expressions and gestures. The episode is often confused (and combined) with another scene of anointment in Bethany: at the house of Lazaraus, where Mary anointed Christ's feet and wiped them with her hair.⁷¹⁷ Because of this, and because both events are identified as having occurred six days before Passover, both scenes formed part of the Passion cycle, but the anointing of Christ's feet was more commonly illustrated, with at least one woman present with a varied number of disciples, and Judas being distinguished pointing at the woman while holding his purse.⁷¹⁸ One of the earliest extant representations is preserved in the illustrated Homilies of Gregory Nazianzus (c.867-86), a manuscript understood to depend on an earlier original of sixth-century date (Fig. 5.40).⁷¹⁹ This depicts the event narrated in of John's gospel with the woman anointing Christ's feet,⁷²⁰ and furthermore places the Entry in a connecting register strongly suggesting the ivory depended on a model similar to that lying behind the Homilies.

This being said, it must be acknowledged that the model for the Homilies was an Eastern type, as evidenced by Christ's side-saddle position on the donkey, and it has been suggested that similar sources, also preserved in the Homilies, were reproduced on the

⁷¹³ Dushman, 1995: 78.

⁷¹⁴ Wooley, 1917: 26. Dushman (1995: 79, 83) cites the *Canterbury Benedictional* for this information, and adds that Æthelwold records the Anglo-Saxons carrying palms into the church "and presumably flowers".

⁷¹⁵ Thorpe, 1884: I, 215; Dushman, 1995: 82-3.

⁷¹⁶ Matthew 26.6-13; Mark 14.3-9; Luke 7.36-50.

⁷¹⁷ John 12.1-8.

⁷¹⁸ Schiller, 1968: 17.

⁷¹⁹ See also Der Nersessian, 1962: 195-228.

⁷²⁰ Schiller, 1968: 17.

early ninth-century column at Masham in Yorkshire.⁷²¹ This may imply that the iconography of the ivory can be considered, like the Homilies and the Masham column, to reflect ninth-century iconographic interests and access to earlier Eastern image types circulating at the time; or it may simply suggest that the ivory reflects a level of access to a common iconographic type which could have been produced at any time after the sixth century. The iconographic details shared by the Homilies and the ivory do not mean that the ivory *needs* to be contemporary with re-production of the manuscript images, although this would not be an unreasonable supposition. Stylistic and iconographic analysis, as well as the fact that the other side of the ivory has been dated to the late eighth or early ninth century, indicates that the Entry and House of Simon scenes post-date the Baptism-Ascension, implying that a ninth to early tenth-century dating would not be unreasonable.

5.2c Summary

Overall, even a brief overview such as this indicates that there is much information to be gleaned from the iconography of the Anglo-Saxon ivories in terms of their art historical sources and symbolic significances. The sources lying behind the earliest ivories all seem to have had their origins in early Christian art, primarily that of the Eastern Mediterranean, but reflect contemporary eighth- and ninth-century iconographic developments, generally from Rome. This corresponds with the information provided by the written sources describing the importation of objects into the region at this time, and the movement of people, information and art through Gaul to and from Rome, while the iconographic adaptations made in the arrangement of the carved details of these ivories demonstrate that the Anglo-Saxon artists worked within current trends adapting their models to suit local needs.

The ninth- and tenth-century ivories demonstrate a different trend of artistic innovation reflecting access to the artistic centres of Carolingian Gaul. Again this is in keeping with our understanding of such links through evidence of correspondence, gift giving and ecclesiastical activities of Anglo-Saxon churchmen in the region. The Transfiguration, Ascension and Entry ivories provide clear examples of such interactions, while at the same time demonstrating a refusal to destroy the ‘older’ (and stylistically

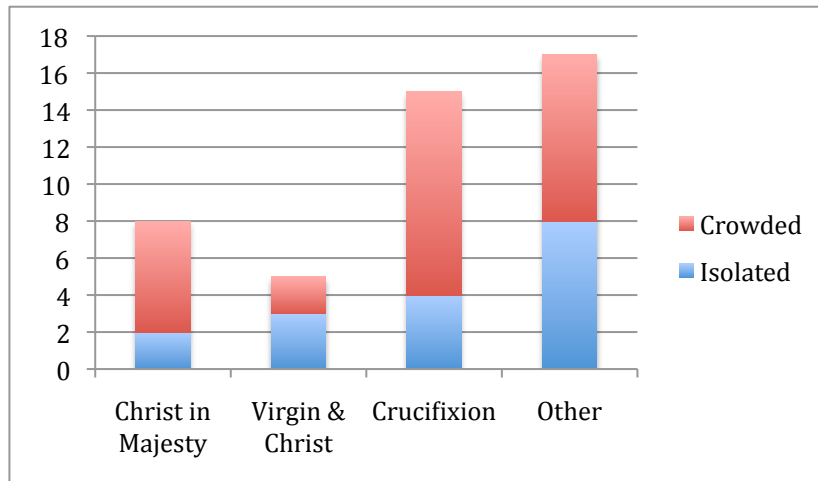
⁷²¹ This column is notoriously difficult to photograph or illustrate due to poor conditions and conservation hence there is no image here. Hawkes, 2002b: 337-48.

different) carvings, choosing instead to elaborate on the existing scenes and so complement them with the new iconographic schemes, the process involving an Anglo-Saxon carver working closely with up-to-date Carolingian models. This seems to demonstrate that despite any co-existence or cross-Channel traffic between Anglo-Saxon England and Carolingian Gaul, deliberate choices were made to retain the older Anglo-Saxon work and situate it within more contemporary ecclesiastical and iconographic developments. The new scenes were not simply added to a piece of ivory that could be recycled; they were selected and articulated as iconographic responses to what already existed; most notably, and in contrast with the later ivories discussed below, there is a preoccupation across all of the early ivories to present narrative schemes in keeping with current (and localised) exegetical and liturgical themes and motifs.

5.3 The Late Tenth and Eleventh Centuries: Christ, the Virgin and the Holy Other

Having considered the various influences behind the figural iconographic schemes carved on the earlier Anglo-Saxon ivories, and briefly outlined the ways in which these could be adapted to serve specific symbolic purposes, it is now possible to consider further the largest group of extant ivories in this study, those of the late tenth to mid eleventh centuries. In this respect, the stark and significant changes in the iconographies and functions of the ivories (with tau- and pectoral crosses predominating), beginning in the mid tenth century, signals a clear ‘line in the sand’ differentiating the ivories produced ‘before’ and ‘after’ the ecclesiastical reforms of the latter half of the tenth century. Until this point there was a strong emphasis on iconographic narrative;⁷²² by contrast, the ivories of the later tenth and eleventh centuries are both functionally and iconographically distinctive, displaying a Benedictine reformist attitude prior to the ‘official’ Norman take-over of Anglo-Saxon England in the later eleventh century.

⁷²² See above, section 5.2.



Graph I: Subject Matter of Anglo-Saxon Ivories c.975-1066

Of the ivories produced between c.975–1066, the iconographic focus is on the figures of Christ in Majesty, the Virgin Mary, and the Crucifixion – varyingly seen as a theological scheme (‘Crowded’) or as singular figures (‘Isolated’) – with a combined total of 28 ivories showing such themes, compared with only 17 ivories displaying non-religious subjects or, as is the case of the Lawrence Pyx and the Beverley Crosier, displaying a rare narrative scheme for the period (Graph I).

The iconography of these later ivories displays further responses to contemporary trends. The preponderance of tau-crosses, thought to have functioned as episcopal crosiers, and their association with actively majestic iconographies speaks to the self-consciously powerful and wealthy status of bishops in the reformed Church, and complements many of the other arts produced at this time in close association with the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Episcopal sacramentaries provide some examples, with the *Benedictional of Æthelwold* providing particular insight into the way iconographic schemes could be adapted and expressed in different media for episcopal purposes. The focus on the iconography of the *Agnus Dei* and *Majestas* at this time also speaks to perceptions of the ‘victory’ of the reformed Church, confirming faith in the victory of Christ in his birth, life, death and resurrection on which it was founded. The dominant role of the Anglo-Saxon liturgy and theology in the iconographic articulations of the ivories further underlines such processes while at the same time perhaps expressing a desire to present the Anglo-Saxon Church, particularly that at Canterbury and Winchester within the wider, Universal Church.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, due to the influx of walrus ivory onto the market in the early tenth century, and the effect of the Benedictine Reform on the arts of Anglo-Saxon England, the proliferation of ivory works at this time is quite telling: of the fifty-seven

total ivories included in this study, thirty-nine are dated to the period between c.975–1066, and of those, fifteen depict the crucifixion. While each of the thirty-nine ivories deserves an in depth analysis of its iconography and place within this group and Anglo-Saxon art as a whole, for brevity's sake, they will be considered in groups and discussed according to iconographic theme: Christ in Majesty; the Virgin; and the Crucifixion. Significantly, the symbolic associations of each iconographic theme are referenced across each group, further highlighting the complex theological culture and artistic expression of the culture responsible for their production.

5.3a Christ in Majesty: Presenting the Triumphant Christ

The proliferation of images of the *Majestas* (seven of the thirty-five later ivories) marks a shift in keeping with current theological and liturgical changes, reflecting contemporary ideas and concepts underpinning perceptions of divine majesty and rulership. While the *Majestas* was depicted in Anglo-Saxon art before the late tenth century,⁷²³ it is depicted with greater frequency in this later period with a predilection for depicting Christ enthroned or as the *Agnus Dei*.

5.3a(i) Christ Enthroned

Christ enthroned is depicted on seven ivories: the Heribert Tau-cross (cat. 22, Fig. 5.44), where the scheme features on one side of the object; the *Majestas Christi* with Four Angels (cat. 23, Fig. 4.41; hereafter the MC4A panel); the Resurrection with Mary & St Peter (cat. 24, Fig. 5.45; hereafter the Resurrection ivory); the *Traditio Legis* (cat. 27, Fig. 3.14A); the Pectoral (cat. 31, Fig. 4.32); a Seated Figure in Majesty (cat. 32, Fig. 5.46); and the *Majestas Christi* with Four Evangelists (cat. 48, Fig. 3.15; hereafter the MC4E panel). Presented in various ways, these ivories display the varied nature of Anglo-Saxon ivory carving, however they highlight the overall iconology current during the late-tenth to mid-eleven centuries, focusing on localised theological and exegetical material through which their art was inspired.

The Heribert Tau-cross presents Christ enthroned in a mandorla, held aloft by four angels (Fig. 5.44); the MC4A panel shows him seated on a simple bench throne within a mandorla with a plain border, raising one hand in benediction and the other holding a book

⁷²³ See cat. 7, 9, 13.

(Fig. 4.41); and the Pectoral portrays him again sitting on a similar bench, raising one hand in benediction and the other holding a book, though this time there is no (surviving) mandorla (Fig. 4.32). Following on from iconographic considerations of a similar scene found in the *Majestas Christi* (cat. 9) and LoC diptych (cat. 12) discussed above, the way the angels hold the mandorla in the Heribert and MC4A ivories, as well as the book held by Christ on all three pieces are features common to many *Majestas* schemes, and in common with these the iconography of the later ivories emphasises the themes of majesty and omnipotent power while the apparent function of these particular objects – a tau-cross crozier, a book cover, and a pectoral cross borne over the breast of the owner – extends such themes to incorporate that with which they are associated: a bishop; a high-ranking ecclesiastic, and the Word of God.⁷²⁴

Likewise, the Resurrection ivory (Fig. 5.45) presents a significant set of iconographic references. The Resurrection is new to this discussion, being the only Anglo-Saxon ivory to depict such a scheme, and the accompanying figures present an array of different theological themes: of bearing witness, redemption, salvation and eternal life. Arranged over two registers Christ is enthroned in the upper, enclosed in a large mandorla that almost thrusts the flanking figures of Mary and Peter out of the composition.⁷²⁵ The upper half of the mandorla contains an inscription taken from Luke 24.39: “See my hands and feet, that it is I myself; handle, and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me to have”,⁷²⁶ and a geometric pattern decorates the lower half; what remains of the frame of the contains, along the top, an inscription, “S(an)C(t)A MARIA S(an)C(tus) PETRVS”, identifying the flanking figures. In the lower register, connected by Christ’s feet at the bottom of the mandorla, two angels hold a large cross, while eight (extremely worn) figures stand below each arm. There are no iconographic parallels for this scheme in the corpus of extant Christian art suggesting that local interest in articulating the themes associated with the ideas of salvation, resurrection and judgement remained current in Anglo-Saxon England throughout the period.

As degraded as this carving is, the iconographic significance of the composition is clear: the angels and figures in the lower register bear witness to an empty cross,

⁷²⁴ For further discussion see cat. 22.

⁷²⁵ The Virgin’s place within this ivory is discussed below, Section 5.3b.

⁷²⁶ Luke 24.39: videte manus meas et pedes quia ipse ego sum palpate et videte quia spiritus carnem et ossa non habet sicut me videtis habere.

signifying the triumphant Christ who has defeated death and brought salvation to all; it intended to signify the cross understood to appear in the heavens at the end of time, seen bleeding with the marks of the crucifixion by sinners, and in glory by the blessed.⁷²⁷ Certainly the duality of Christ's role is highlighted by the inscription around the mandorla, focusing on his human flesh as well as his spiritual role, articulated by his presentation as enthroned ruler of the Cosmos.⁷²⁸

The *Traditio Legis* depicts Christ handing over the law and the keys, an apt image for a period of reform, setting out, as it does, the 'appropriate' relationship between Church and State in terms of the Law and eternal life. The pairing of Christ with Peter and Paul in such schemes has a long history, being seen as early as c.359 on the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus (Fig. 5.47A), where the iconographic arrangement combines classical images of bearded philosophers surrounded by their students (seen in Fig. 5.47B) and the handing over of imperial decrees by emperors (like that shown in Fig. 5.47C). In these earlier versions, however (as noted), it is either Paul or Peter who receives the donation, witnessed by the other. The combined donation depicted here, in the context of ecclesiastical reform reinforces the ideas of God's Law as well as his entrusting such regulations to be enforced (and followed) by those who proclaim to belong to the Church, ecclesiasts and lay individuals alike.

The final enthroned Christ dated to this later Anglo-Saxon period is the MC4E panel (Fig. 3.15) with its four evangelist symbols derived from the description in Revelation 4.1-11 of the four creatures surrounding the heavenly throne chanting eternal praise.⁷²⁹ The latest ivory in this group, the iconography of this scheme displays more complex features than has been seen on the earlier enthroned images. As portrayed in four small (now badly damaged) ivory panels (cat. 47, Fig. 5.48A-D) and three of the crucifixions (cat. 34, 36, 40, Fig. 5.49A-C),⁷³⁰ the individuality and emphasis placed on the evangelist symbols viewed here in their heavenly form find a place the wider context of reformist attitudes and Anglo-Saxon theological and exegetical material in the eleventh

⁷²⁷ Ó Carragáin, 2005.

⁷²⁸ For full discussion of the role of the Virgin in this scene, see below Section 5.3b.

⁷²⁹ See also Ezekiel 1.

⁷³⁰ The evangelist portraits surrounding the Crucifixion demonstrate the same expression of a triumphant Christ ruling over the Cosmos hence their brief inclusion here; however they also express other themes, discussed further below, Section 5.3c.

century where they represent a triumphant Christ's dominion over the cosmos, acting as a reminder that the faithful should also sing perpetual praises to the Ruler of the Cosmos whose divine nature is in all things.⁷³¹

Considered as a group, each of the ivories depicting the enthroned Christ expresses themes of power and the demand for devout adherence to the adoration of Christ, while also pointing to current Anglo-Saxon concerns, specific to the late tenth and mid eleventh centuries in a context of widespread ecclesiastical reform.

5.3a(ii) Christ as *Agnus Dei*

The *Agnus Dei* Tau-cross (cat. 25, Fig. 4.26A), shows the lamb in front of a nimbed cross staff and stepping out of a plain medallion supported by two male figures, one in a short tunic and the other in a full-length garment. On the reverse, is a winged seraph with outspread hands encircled by a pellet mandorla, which is flanked by two winged beasts whose heads bow downwards, and which have ribbed and bifurcated foliate tails. On the reverse of the Pectoral (cat. 31, Fig. 4.32), the *Agnus Dei* with a cruciform halo strides in front of a cross-staff, holding in its forelegs a book similar to that held by the *Majestas* on the other side. Above and below are the eagle of John, and the ox of Luke, suggesting the man of Matthew and the lion of Mark would have originally flanked the Lamb on either side. The Pendant Reliquary (cat. 53, Fig. 5.50) displays an archer on its lid, while the nimbed *Agnus Dei* with a staff-cross is placed in a central medallion on the base, and the four evangelist symbols are set in semi-circular frames at the end of each cross-arm, the whole being filled with inhabited plant-scrolls.⁷³²

The iconographic significance of the *Agnus Dei* seen in these ivories incorporates a number of complex cross-references from the Old and New Testaments that have been most usefully rehearsed by Ó Carragáin in his account of the introduction of the *Agnus Dei* chant into the western liturgy and its presence in Anglo-Saxon England.⁷³³ Put briefly, the apocalyptic account of the Lamb on Mount Zion influenced the expansion of its original meaning (associated with the sacrifice of Abel in Genesis 4.3-4) into three wider areas of biblical and liturgical thought: the *Agnus Dei*, or sacrificial lamb of Isaiah 53.7 and John

⁷³¹ For more see Cronin, 1995; O'Reilly, 1998; Brown, 1998.

⁷³² Raw, 1967: 391-94.

⁷³³ Ó Carragáin, 1978: 131-47; *Ibid.*, 2005.

1.29 which references the death of the Redeemer, bringing together the suffering of Christ with the Lamb brought to slaughter; the *Agnus Paschalis*, or Paschal (Easter) lamb, references the ‘new’ Passover by aligning the Lamb of the first Passover of Exodus 12 with the lamb of I Corinthians 5.7 which is the risen Christ; and the *Agnus Victor*, or apocalyptic lamb of Revelation 5.6, 14.1, and 21.23, where Christ’s eternal victory and sovereignty are exemplified by his death on the cross, the Tree of Life.⁷³⁴ The use of the Lamb as a symbol of the sacrificed and risen Christ continued to flourish, particularly in Anglo-Saxon England where it was depicted most famously in sculptural contexts in the eighth century at Bewcastle in Cumbria (Fig. 5.51A), Ruthwell in Dumfriesshire (Fig. 5.51B), and Wirksworth in Derbyshire (Fig. 5.51C).⁷³⁵

The early Anglo-Saxon Church focused on the Lamb in both the liturgy and literature, invoking it at the Veneration of the Cross on Good Friday, in the celebrations of baptism and the Eucharist.⁷³⁶ Included in these articulations was the eschatological recognition of the Lamb of the Apocalypse, linking the end of days with the Eucharist; at the Second Coming the Lamb of the Apocalypse will open the Book of Life and humanity will be judged according to its actions, and its worthiness through receiving the Eucharist.⁷³⁷ Bede, following Augustine, and followed in turn by Ælfric, examined the Lamb as a representation of the Church as a whole founded on the suffering of Christ, implying that the hardships endured by the Christian community would enable them to follow Christ in receiving all honour and glory, and so emphasising the adoration due to the Church through the Lamb.⁷³⁸ The focus of the scene on the Wirksworth slab is that of triumph and glory, a *Majestas Agni* (or *Agnus Victor*) rather than an *Agnus Dei*. This (latter) aspect of the Lamb, which is associated with the sacrifice of the crucifixion, and denoted by the cross staff and the raised foreleg was as an iconographic motif circulating in Anglo-Saxon England by the eleventh century.

In the ninth and tenth centuries it was most often depicted in a *clipeus* or mandorla accompanied by the instruments of the Passion and standing on a scroll or book, but by the

⁷³⁴ Schiller, 1972: 117-18; Hawkes, 2003b: 263-86.

⁷³⁵ For more see: Ó Carragáin, 2005; Hawkes, 1995.

⁷³⁶ Schiller, 1972: 118

⁷³⁷ Warner, 1906: 13; Hawkes, 1995: 264.

⁷³⁸ Augustine *De Doct Christ* III, xxxi 44-xxxvii 55 (*PL* 82-88); Bede *Explanatio Apocalypsis* I v, II xiii-xiv (*PL* 93, 145, 169-78); Bonner, 1966; Ælfric *Sermo* xxv ‘On the nativity of John the Baptist’ (Thorpe, 1844: 358); Hawkes, 1995: 265.

late-tenth and into the eleventh century it was found on the pennies of Æthelred II (978–1016, Fig. 5.52),⁷³⁹ and featured on the reverse of the Crucifix Reliquary now held at the V&A (cat. 34), the contemporary Brussel's cross (Fig. 5.53), the so-called Cluny altar (Fig. 5.54A), the *Agnus Dei* relief found above the west tower doorway at St John the Evangelist Church (Radclive, Buckinghamshire) dated to the eleventh century (Fig. 5.55A), and is also included in the missal of Robert of Jumièges in a miniature depicting the Multitude Adoring the Lamb (Fig. 5.54B). Like the three ivories these present the nimbed lamb, his foreleg/s upraised, before a cross-staff.

Having said this, the iconographic details of the ivory representations of the *Agnus Dei* all present different aspects of the wider biblical and liturgical frames of reference concerning the *Agnus paschalis* and *Agnus victor* as well as the *Agnus Dei*. The Tau-cross, with its depiction of a winged seraph on the other side of the Lamb, for instance, could have been intended to call to mind the vision of Isaiah, where the seraphim adore Christ in Majesty; this might suggest that the *Agnus Dei* on this ivory was also intended to recall the *Agnus paschalis*, or Eucharistic lamb or the *Agnus victor*, apocalyptic lamb of Revelations 5.6-12. The iconographic combination of the seraphim (or winged creatures generally) with the *Agnus Dei* is unusual in Anglo-Saxon art at this time, but a number of other examples, like the coins of Æthelred II, display the Lamb in conjunction with a bird, the dove,⁷⁴⁰ while the late tenth- or early eleventh-century relief at High Coniscliffe, Darlington (Fig. 5.55C), showing the *Agnus Dei* flanked by angels and a ribbon-like scroll (referencing the scroll of the seven seals of Revelation 6.1-8.5),⁷⁴¹ all indicate the varying ways in which the Lamb could be associated with winged creatures that implicitly reference heavenly creatures.⁷⁴²

The Pectoral and the Pendant Reliquary display the idea of *Agnus victor* as the exalted Christ is surrounded by symbols of the evangelists (who are also the Beasts of the Apocalypse),⁷⁴³ and the lamb is set within a plant-scroll transforming the cross into the Tree of Life. This being said, the details of the evangelist symbols do vary, with the Eagle

⁷³⁹ Woods, 2013: 299-309. For more, see: Fletcher, 1999.

⁷⁴⁰ For further discussion on the identity of the bird, see Woods, 2013: 299-301; Keynes & Naismith, 2011: 175-223. Gannon (2003: 117-18) speaks of birds in vine-scroll ornament on the coinage.

⁷⁴¹ For more, see: CASSS, vol. I.

⁷⁴² Baker chapter on wings

⁷⁴³ Cronin, 1995: 111-18; Baker, 2011.

of John on the Pectoral lacking a halo. Furthermore, although two of the symbols on the Pectoral are missing, the respective positions of the symbols on the Pendant Reliquary differ from those remaining on the Pectoral, the eagle being set above the *Agnus Dei*, but the winged man below. Nevertheless, all the extant creatures bear books and scrolls; this and the shared association with the Lamb suggest it is not unreasonable to assume that the symbols missing from the Pectoral would have been iconographically similar to those of the Pendant Reliquary.

The iconography of the Pendant Reliquary, and to a lesser extent the Pectoral, is also extended by reference to the cross as the Tree (or Font) of Life. The plant-scroll, although current in continental art,⁷⁴⁴ was long-established in the art of the Anglo-Saxons, particularly its carved arts (Fig. 5.56A,B & 5.57),⁷⁴⁵ and its association with the *Agnus Dei* references, not simply the ‘living cross’ but also the Tree of Life of both Genesis 2.9 and Revelation 22.1-3.⁷⁴⁶ By the eleventh century the associations would have been familiar through the liturgy, specifically the *praefatio* of the Holy Cross, a prayer repeated before the Canon of the Mass during Holy Week, from Palm Sunday to Maundy Thursday: “Death came from a tree, life was to spring from a tree; he who conquered on the wood was also to be conquered on the wood”.⁷⁴⁷

The ivories depicting the various images of Christ Enthroned in the late tenth to mid-eleventh centuries all present similar thematic frames of reference, based upon contemporary theological, exegetical and liturgical practices that emphasise Christ’s triumph over death, the salvatory consequences of this for humanity, and his lordship of

⁷⁴⁴ See, e.g. the early ninth-century Sacramentary Drogo (Paris, BnF: MS. Lat. 9428, fol. 15v); the mid-ninth century Book of Pericopes of Heinrich II (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek: Clm. 4452); the mid-tenth century Corvey Sacramentary (Leipzig, Stadtbibliothek: Cod. CXC (Rep. I 4°57), fol. IV); or the early eleventh-century manuscript illumination of the Crucifixion in MS 709 at the Morgan Library & Museum in New York (New York, Morgan Library & Museum: MS M709, fol. 1v).

⁷⁴⁵ See, e.g. the ninth-century Newent cross with allusions to Eden and the crucifixion (CASSS, vol. X); the mid-tenth century stone crucifix at Romsey Abbey (CASSS, vol. VII); and the three early eleventh-century sculptures at Barnack, Northamptonshire (CASSS, vol V).

⁷⁴⁶ Genesis 2.9: *produxitque Dominus Deus de humo omne lignum pulchrum visu et ad vescendum suave lignum etiam vitae in medio paradisi lignumque scientiae boni et mali;* Revelation 22.1-3: *et ostendit mihi fluvium aquae vitae splendidum tamquam cristallum procedentem de sede Dei et agni, in medio plateae eius et ex utraque parte fluminis lignum vitae adferens fructus duodecim per menses singula reddentia fructum suum et folia ligni ad sanitatem gentium, et omne maledictum non erit amplius et sedes Dei et agni in illa erunt et servi eius servient illi.*

⁷⁴⁷ Schiller, 1972: 133-34.

the cosmos. In the same vein, against the background of the renewed sense of devotion within the Anglo-Saxon church, the depiction of Christ in such a manner not only highlights his enduring dominion and place within the daily lives of the Anglo-Saxons, but also the potential of such imagery to ‘lend’ power and influence to the owner or bearer of such objects and therefore promote their place within the late Anglo-Saxon Church.

5.3b The Virgin: Mother, Intercessor, Queen

There are a total of twelve images of the Virgin carved in ivory dated to the late tenth to mid eleventh century, nearly doubling the amount of visual representations of her in the material from her small presence within larger narratives in the early ivories.⁷⁴⁸ The iconography of the Virgin and Child has a long history in Christian art, and seems to have been particularly prominent in pre-Conquest England, where it has been argued that the development of Marian devotion there inspired the rest of Europe.⁷⁴⁹ In large part this was due to her roles as the instrument of the Incarnation and the concomitant redemption of humanity through the death, in human form, of Christ on the Cross.⁷⁵⁰ Against this background, the relative absence of the Virgin in ivory in earlier Anglo-Saxon art is notable, as is her repeated presence from the tenth century.

In these later ivories, the Virgin is pictured in several key roles, namely: as a Mother in the divine sense (e.g. the bearer of Christ or ‘Theotokos’) or as a distressed mother, human in her place of mourning her son but divine in her position near him at his death; as an Intercessor, giving her the position of arguably the most powerful figure besides Christ and the sole petitioner on behalf of mankind; and finally, as Queen, seen as the *Regina Angelorum*, worthy of devotion in her own right as the Mother of God. Together, therefore, these ivories display cohesive iconographic schemes and a purposeful use of a precious material such that the objects themselves suggest a wider, socially/ecclesiastically elite appreciation of the image of the Virgin.⁷⁵¹

⁷⁴⁸ See above, Section 5.2 and cat. 2, 5, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16.

⁷⁴⁹ Bishop, 1918: 227; Woolf, 1968: 114; Barlow, 1979: 18; Clayton, 1990: 1.

⁷⁵⁰ Clayton, 1990: 182; Karkov, 2011: 84.

⁷⁵¹ For the extensive literature on the iconography of the Virgin and Child in early Christian art, and its articulation in Anglo-Saxon England, see: Lawrence, 1924-5: 148-61; Meyvaert, 1979: 70; Dodwell, 1982: 86, 272; Plummer, 1896: vol. 1, 369; Kitzinger, 1956: 248-64; with particular reference to Clayton, 2003 and Hawkes, 1997.

The Virgin as Mother

The Virgin & St John the Evangelist ivories (cat. 30, Fig. 5.58, hereafter VJE)⁷⁵² and the Virgin and Child Enthroned (cat. no. 33, Fig. 5.59, hereafter VCE) represents, along with several depictions in the crucifixion ivories of this period (cat. nos. 22, 41, 43, 44, 45, 46, Fig. 5.60A-F), an emotional figure unlike the other Virgin ivories discussed below, as the context of her gesture and visible emotions act as iconographic motifs that do not need a background or really any other figure, to decipher.

The VCE ivory being the least emotive of this ‘motherly’ group, she is nevertheless shown tenderly holding the Christ Child in her lap, her gaze travelling down towards him, likely reflecting the act of witnessing his divine nature, is in contrast with the confronting gaze seen in her more queenly depictions. Her covered head and emotional position in holding the Child is reflected in the same pathetic capacity seen in the VJE ivory as well as the crucifixions; the presence of Mary in Crucifixion scenes constitutes, as Raw put it, the most popular grouping of figures in Anglo-Saxon depictions of the event (including John the Evangelist). The Virgin’s inclusion in the crucifixion scene is based on two passages found only in the Gospel of John: John 19.26-7 which describes the conversation between Christ and his mother, and his giving custody of her to his favourite disciple.⁷⁵³ The image of Mary (and John), which Raw argues was the preferred choice of Anglo-Saxon artists at this time, attaches more emotional significance to Christ’s words from the cross than the Anglo-Saxon liturgy and Good Friday prayers allowed for, as they focussed more on Christ’s forgiveness of the repentant thief than emotive responses to the event itself.⁷⁵⁴ Anglo-Saxon manuscript illuminations of the Virgin during this period invariably depict her in the same manner as that seen in the ivories, as witness and mourner: seen especially in the Ramsey Psalter (Fig. 5.61A) and the Gospels of Countess Judith (Fig. 5.62B), the Virgin is grief-stricken and gesturing towards her crucified son,

⁷⁵² While there is no question of cat. no. 29 acting as a pair, the John the Evangelist figure will be discussed further below in connection with his place in crucifixion scenes instead of here.

⁷⁵³ John 19.26-7: cum vidisset ergo Iesus matrem et discipulum stantem quem diligebat dicit matri suae mulier ecce filius tuus, deinde dicit discipulo ecce mater tua et ex illa hora accepit eam discipulus in sua. (“When Jesus therefore had seen his mother and the disciple standing whom he loved, he saith to his mother: Woman, behold thy son. After that, he saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother. And from that hour, the disciple took her to his own.)

⁷⁵⁴ Raw, 1990: 95.

which Clayton argues, anticipates the highly emotive portrayals of the Crucifixion in the following centuries.⁷⁵⁵

The Virgin as Intercessor

Mentioned briefly above in the discussion of the Resurrection ivory (Fig. 5.63), the Virgin's place within this composition is in keeping with vernacular texts in Anglo-Saxon England during the late tenth and eleventh centuries, namely the Legend of Theophilus, as well as the remarkable development of prayers to the Virgin circulating in the south at this time.⁷⁵⁶ Of interest here is the preoccupation with praying to the Virgin and asking for her intercession on behalf of those reciting such invocations; presenting the Virgin as "a powerful legal advocate with particular power over the written word, and with a special ability to intercede", the manuscripts seen in the late tenth century draw freely from the ideas of Mary's complete sinlessness, and beginning with a text composed by Dunstan (one of the initiators of the Reform movement) in Glastonbury, c.940-56 seen preserved in two later eleventh-century manuscripts.⁷⁵⁷ Within the ivory therefore, is the visual articulation of such concepts, with the Virgin's place at Christ's right hand, she is in position to plead to him on behalf of all mankind, and as such she is in keeping with the profusion of Marian devotion expanding in Anglo-Saxon England at the time, expressing an extremely localised iconography as seen in the manuscripts, like that in the 'Quintity' image seen in Titus D.xxvi (Fig. 5.63).

The Virgin as Queen: Regina Angelorum

The Enthroned Virgin (cat. 28, Fig. 3.14B hereafter EV) and the Quatrefoil Virgin and Child (cat. 29, Fig. 5.64 hereafter QVC) have both been dated to the late-tenth and eleventh centuries according to their stylistic details, but it is their iconographic significance that unites them here. The Virgin in each ivory is shown sitting on a throne (with varying levels of embellishment) with the Child on her left knee, holding various attributes and surrounded by decorative borders. Mentioned briefly in previous sections, the full impact of the motif of *Regina Angelorum* is expressed and the importance of the

⁷⁵⁵ Clayton, 1990: 174.

⁷⁵⁶ Clayton, 1990: 110-121.

⁷⁵⁷ Cambridge, Trinity College: O.1.18 (1042); Cambridge, Trinity College: B.14.3 (289). For more see Lapidge, 1975: 109; Clayton, 1990: 104.

Virgin's role in the Incarnation is driven home. The title of *Maria Regina* was widespread in exegetical and devotional literature from the middle of the tenth century in Anglo-Saxon England, and her depiction as the *Regina Angelorum* has its roots in sixth-century Eastern hieretic images, like that seen on the ampullae (Fig 5.7B). These images initially showed her standing, dressed in imperial garb, as in early sixth-century art of the East, which were circulating in the West by the seventh century, which changed to an enthroned Virgin with the Child and accompanied by angels – as in the sixth-century icon from Sinai or the mosaic fragment found in the Oratory of John VII in Old St Peters (Fig. 5.65A,B),⁷⁵⁸ and was current in the Insular world in contexts as wide-ranging as the fragmented Dewsbury cross shaft of c.800 (Fig. 5.66),⁷⁵⁹ the eleventh-century Shelford cross (Fig. 5.67),⁷⁶⁰ the contemporary Nunburholme cross (Fig. 5.68A)⁷⁶¹ and the c.1000 Arenberg Gospels (Fig. 5.68B).

It must be noted here that the EV ivory is coupled with the *Traditio Legis* ivory discussed above (Fig. 3.14A), in that either ivory covers one side of an evangelistary dated to c.850-875.⁷⁶² As discussed above, Christ in the *Traditio Legis* acts as a Law-Giver, and the Virgin is generally seen as an Intercessor and expression of the Incarnation; with the *Traditio Legis* acting as the front cover and the EV panel covering the back, the significance of the connecting iconographies is plain. The *Traditio Legis cum Clavis* hands over the law (to be abided by) and the keys (to grant entry into heaven), but without the Intercession of the Virgin (enhanced by her portrayal as the *Regina Angelorum*), the sins of mankind will be inescapably damning. Crucially, the relative position of either iconography impacts the presentation of such motifs to the viewer. As a closed book, the front *Traditio Legis* presents a strong face and instant reminder of the power and dominion of Christ, whose law is unyielding and judgement is zealous; the EV in this case acts as an afterthought, an image which in case the viewer forgets the impact of the *Traditio Legis*, can act as an intervention and bring the forgetful viewer back into the proverbial fold. If however the book is held, the act of grasping front and back covers allows for a full awareness of both ivories (and therefore their intended messages) simultaneously. The

⁷⁵⁸ Nordhagen, 1978.

⁷⁵⁹ Collingwood, 1907: 163-4; Cramp & Lang, 1977b: pl. 2b; Clayton, 1990: 156.

⁷⁶⁰ Pattison, 1973: pl. XLIVa; Clayton, 1990: 176.

⁷⁶¹ Pattison, 1973: pl. XLC; Lang, 1976: 75-94; Clayton, 1990: 176-77.

⁷⁶² For more see the catalogue entry for either ivory, vol. II.

symbolic significance therefore in presented in a monumental manner, acting as a sculptural reminder of iconographic themes.

Overall, the Virgin depicted in the ivories here acts very much in keeping with localised Anglo-Saxon motifs, reminding the ‘Reformed’ viewers of the late tenth to mid eleventh centuries of her role in the Incarnation and as a vocal, and ultimately powerful, Intercessor on behalf of mankind.

5.3c The Crucifixion of Christ

Of the range of subjects depicted on the Anglo-Saxon carved ivories, the most common seems to have been that of the Crucifixion of Christ, perhaps not surprising given the pivotal nature of this event in Christian thought. What is significant here, however, is that (with one exception), all the extant ivory Crucifixion schemes date to the late tenth or eleventh centuries.⁷⁶³

Schiller has suggested that the earliest images of the Crucifixion were probably associated with the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (*c.*326), the alleged finding of the True Cross (313-14), veneration of the holy places and the introduction of liturgical feasts connected to the cross.⁷⁶⁴ The practice of collecting and venerating relics of the crucifixion in the sixth century only served to enhance the practice of venerating the cross and contributed to the emergence of pictorial representations of the Crucifixion, like that seen in the sixth-century Rabbula Gospels (Figs. 5.69). One of the earliest Western images survive from the fifth century can be seen on an ivory plaque held at the British Museum, dated to *c.*420/30 (Fig. 5.70).

Drawing on the work of early Church writers, such as Augustine of Hippo, Jerome and Gregory the Great that were circulating in Anglo-Saxon England,⁷⁶⁵ the writings of three Anglo-Saxon authors best reveal the attitudes towards the event that were current in Anglo-Saxon England: Bede, Alcuin and Ælfric.⁷⁶⁶ Bede’s commentaries on Mark and

⁷⁶³ The only exception to this is the Crucifixion in the LoC Diptych, cat. 12. For extended discussion of the pivotal nature of the Crucifixion in early Christian thinking, see e.g. Thoby, 1959-63; Schiller, 1972; Dodwell, 1982; Deshman, 1997; O’Reilly, 1987, Coatsworth, 1988; Raw, 1990.

⁷⁶⁴ Schiller, 1972: 89.

⁷⁶⁵ See above, Chapter 3, Section 3.4.

⁷⁶⁶ See e.g. Gameson, 1992: 85-102; Brown, 1997: 159-75; Bullogh, 2004; Thacker, 2005; DeGregorio, 2006; ; Magennis & Swan, 2009; Dales, 2012; 2013; Darby, 2013; 2014.

Luke, for instance, include long passages copied directly from Augustine and Gregory focussing on the salvation of the soul,⁷⁶⁷ while Alcuin's treatise on John relies extensively on Augustine in his focus on the way in which scriptural texts invite contemplation of Christ's dual nature,⁷⁶⁸ and Ælfric, drawing on similar sources as well as the earlier work of Bede, likewise displays concern with the salvation of the soul and Christ's role in this process.⁷⁶⁹ All three worked in ecclesiastical centres able to draw on a wide range of earlier scholarship and theological treatises,⁷⁷⁰ and their works thus reveal much that is relevant to our understanding of how the Crucifixion was perceived at different times in Anglo-Saxon England. Put very briefly, the early Church in Anglo-Saxon England held that it was the Resurrection (made possible by the Crucifixion) that offered hope of eternal life, but by the eleventh century salvation focussed solely on Christ's death.⁷⁷¹ Against this background, the carvings and paintings depicting the Crucifixion were closely associated with liturgical commemorations and shared a common purpose in their function of making Christ present for the faithful. Like the spoken word of the liturgy, the visual arts referred the viewer back to Christ by calling to mind his presence, setting out the theological significance of the crucifixion as well as the congregation participating in such implications on a historical and emotional level.⁷⁷²

Of interest here is the fact that the fifteen ivory Crucifixions dated to the late tenth and eleventh centuries, despite considerable variation in their iconographic details, are composed of two types: the 'Isolated' type, which is preserved on three ivories (cat. 21, 39, 42; Fig. 5.71A-C); and the 'Crowded' type where the panel is filled with accompanying figures such as Mary, John the Evangelist and angels (cat. 22, 34 [Fig. 5.72], 35-38 [Fig. 5.73], 40, 41, 43-44 [Fig. 5.74], 45-46 [Fig. 5.75]).

The 'Isolated' type of Crucifixion has only few parallels in Anglo-Saxon art generally, but these too date to the later period – like that preserved at Daglingworth in Gloucestershire which has been dated to the tenth century (Fig. 5.76A) or the life-size *c.*1025 Romsey crucifixion (Fig. 5.76B).⁷⁷³ The phenomenon is probably best explained as

⁷⁶⁷ Jenkins, 1966; Furry, 2014.

⁷⁶⁸ Chazelle, 2001: 72.

⁷⁶⁹ Magennis & Swan, 2009.

⁷⁷⁰ See e.g. Lapidge, 1985a; 1985b; 2005.

⁷⁷¹ For a full discussion, see Raw, 1990.

⁷⁷² *Ibid.*: 187.

⁷⁷³ Bryant, 2012.

being in keeping with general devotional trends of the time,⁷⁷⁴ with the Crucifixion acting as the focal point for contemplation,⁷⁷⁵ as Raw has pointed out, “far from explaining Christain belief in simple terms, it reflected many of the most subtle and precocious ideas of the time”.⁷⁷⁶ The ‘Isolated’ Christ depicted in the ivories, therefore, is best considered within this context, as a means of personal devotion and contemplation of the theology of salvation; the iconographic function facilitated personal devotion as well as a reminder of the Crucifixion and its place within the liturgical year.⁷⁷⁷

The supplementary elements included in the ‘Crowded’ type of Crucifixion of this period were extremely varied; in addition to the Virgin and John the Evangelist (cats. 22, 41, 43, 44, 46), they included figures of angels above the arms of the cross (cats. 37, 41, 43, 44, 45, 46), personifications of the Sun and Moon (cats. 38), Longinus and Stephaton (cats. 37, 38), the Beasts of the Apocalypse/Evangelists (cats. 34, 36, 40), and the *Dextera Dei* (cats. 35, 39, 40, 41, 42, 44, 45, 46). Looking at the crucifixions as a group allows for a broader perspective to be gained, and highlights these five elements as acting as iconographic devices that connect *and* distinguish the ‘Crowded’ Crucifixions from each other.⁷⁷⁸

Considering the iconographic alternatives that were available to Anglo-Saxon artists depicting the Crucifixion,⁷⁷⁹ the repeated use of these figures points to the importance invested in John’s account of the event which was the gospel text read on Good Friday in Anglo-Saxon England; the other gospels were read during Holy Week in Carolingian and Ottonian contexts, stimulating their artists to use a wider variety of synoptic gospel sources to illustrate their versions of the scene.⁷⁸⁰ Thus, while Anglo-Saxon illuminations from the Arenberg Gospels, the Sherborne Pontifical, Aelfwine’s prayer book, and the Missal of Robert Jumièges have been shown to have depended on the Metz school, they, like the ivories, present an apparently more specific and localised

⁷⁷⁴ For a full account see Raw 1990.

⁷⁷⁵ For a summary, see Raw, 1990; see also Baker, 2015.

⁷⁷⁶ Raw, 1990: 3.

⁷⁷⁷ *Ibid.*: 52.

⁷⁷⁸ For more see Appendix III.

⁷⁷⁹ See Raw, 1990: 93. She lists a number of Metz productions that have already been discussed in the paragraphs above, namely: the Brunswick casket, the Drogo Sacramentary, Utrecht Psalter. The crucifixion images in the Utrecht Psalter were removed when it was copied in England (c. 1000) with only the instruments of the Passion being retained.

⁷⁸⁰ Raw, 1990: 93.

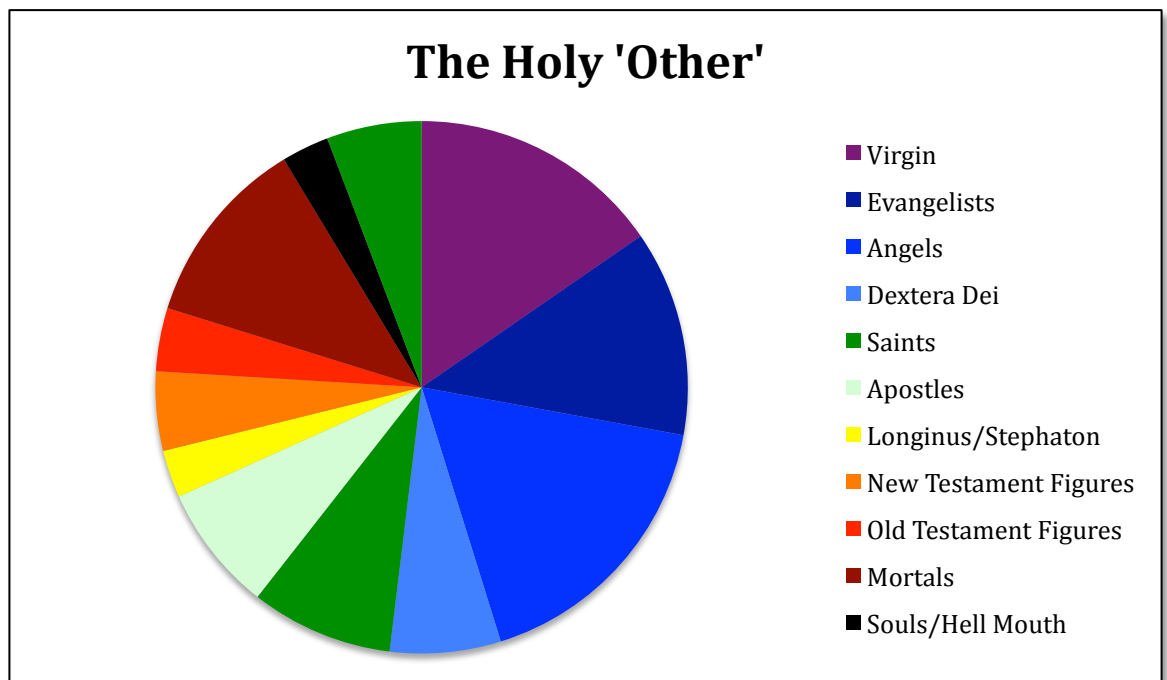
Anglo-Saxon iconographic response to the Crucifixion in the predominance placed on the roles of Mary and John, Longinus and Stephaton, angels, evangelists and cosmological symbols.

5.3d The Holy ‘Other’: Celestial Beings, Saints, Angels, Apostles and Mortals

Within Chapter 5, specifically the discussion on the ‘Crowded’ Crucifixion ivories, it was acknowledged briefly that there is a considerable body of extant ivories that include an interesting array of human and non-human figures. The individual iconographic analysis of the ‘Isolated’ Crucifixion, Christ in Majesty and the Virgin as discrete entities gave a sense of the iconographies developed within the context of Benedictine reformist attitudes promoting personalised, and intimate devotion. Contrasting such schemes, are the proliferation of figures found in the earlier, narrative ivories from the eighth to mid-tenth centuries, as well as the ‘Crowded’ Crucifixions seen in the later ivories; acknowledging every single figure or iconographic motif seen in these ivories would add nothing to this study, however some of the more general, and unique, themes and motifs can be touched upon briefly as they exemplify the Anglo-Saxon “precociousness” in producing a distinctively local vernacular on a visual level. Contrasting the constant barrage of crowded narrative scenes of the pre-mid tenth century ivories, of the thirty-nine ivories dated to *c.*975-1066, thirty-two portray what is defined here as the Holy ‘Other’; figures, personifications and beings that are considered here as holy because of their placement near figures of the Divine (e.g. Christ, God or the Virgin). Those that do not display such figures, namely the Fragment of a Spoon (cat. 18), the Three-Beasts Comb (cat. 19), Whalebone Chess pieces (cat. 20), the Pierced Zoomorphic panel (cat. 56) and the Zoomorphic pen case (cat. 57), are nevertheless full of iconographic meaning, however, it is the figural scenes that are of focus here.

For the most part, it would seem, the inclusion of Angels, Evangelists and the Virgin are the key ‘other’ most often portrayed in these later ivories (Fig. App.4.1). While the Virgin is an iconographic type in her own right,⁷⁸¹ here she acts as one of the many holy figures ‘crowding’ scenes that exemplify Benedictine ‘themes’ such as salvation, intercession, the act of witnessing, and perpetual devotion.

⁷⁸¹ See Chapter 5 for more.



Graph II: The Holy ‘Other’ Depicted in the Ivories of Anglo-Saxon England c.550-1066. The angels, varying in number between two and four, act as attendants who venerate, exhibit and adore the cross transforming it into a throne bearing the Son of God at the moment of his salvific death.⁷⁸² Raw’s study cites the Sherborne Pontifical and Arenberg Gospels as being almost unique examples of such iconographies,⁷⁸³ showing flying angels accompanying the crucified Christ, Mary, Joseph and the *Dextera Dei* above, but the ivories portraying these figures indicate that the iconographic scheme extended beyond the context of manuscript miniatures. Belief in the presence of angels was widespread in Anglo-Saxon England,⁷⁸⁴ in part because they were believed to connect the crucifixion as a historical event with the celebration of the mass. As Mayr Harting and Hawkes have noted, “almost every prayer in the Common of the Mass is an angelic prayer.”⁷⁸⁵ The angels in the Anglo-Saxon ivories therefore belong within a wide-spread set of theological beliefs current in the region from at least the eighth century, and reflect iconographic articulations of these traditions as they were expressed in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

⁷⁸² For discussion, see Hawkes, 1996: 77-94.

⁷⁸³ London, British Library: Cotton MS Tiberius C.I; New York, The Morgan Library and Museum: M.869.

⁷⁸⁴ See for instance, the Anglo-Saxon law codes: *Eccle. Institutes X* (Thorpe, 1840: II, 408); *I Cnut 4, 2* (Liebermann, 1903: I, 284).

⁷⁸⁵ Mayr-Harting, 1998: 14; Hawkes, 2007: 440.

The inclusion of the four Beasts of the Apocalypse in Crucifixion scenes are set in close association with the cross, a setting that – like the presence of the angels – indicates that the cross should be read as the heavenly throne. But they also signify cosmological frames of reference in their quarternities, representing the four rivers of paradise, the four evangelists, the four virtues, the four elements, or the four winds, ultimately standing for creation of which Christ is Lord over all.⁷⁸⁶ As symbols of the evangelists they represent the Word, and when placed at the extremities of the cross-arms (as in the case of cat. 33), or when placed at the interstices of the cross-head (cat. 35, 39) they represent the spread of the Word to the four corners of the world.⁷⁸⁷ Overall, therefore, they indicate a concern among those responsible for the design of these late ivories to emphasise the place of the reformed Church within the Universal Church, and the eschatological importance of the Crucifixion in the workings of God’s salvific designs for humanity.

Cosmological symbols such as the *Dextera dei* and the personifications of the Sun and Moon on the other hand emphasises other forms of heavenly frames of reference. The *Dextera Dei* is, of course, a common motif in images of the Crucifixion from an early date,⁷⁸⁸ and cannot be deemed specific to the Anglo-Saxon ivory schemes. It was intended to signify the salvific purpose of Christ’s sacrifice and the fulfilment of God’s overall design for the salvation of humanity as foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament.⁷⁸⁹ The Sun and Moon, while having a presence in Anglo-Saxon images of the Crucifixion from the ninth century onwards, reflecting contemporary continental trends, appear as symbolic references to the eclipse that took place at Christ’s death,⁷⁹⁰ as well as cosmic witnesses of God’s victory over death on the cross, and as cosmological symbols of Christ’s dominion over the created world.⁷⁹¹ From the mid ninth century onwards, however, they increase in size, are personified and express grief/emotion.⁷⁹² In this manner, they feature in a number of late Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, such as the late tenth-

⁷⁸⁶ Schiller, 1972: 108; see also O’Reilly, 1998: 49-94.

⁷⁸⁷ Schiller, 1972: 108; Baker, 2011.

⁷⁸⁸ Schiller, 1972: 324-5.

⁷⁸⁹ Raw, 1990: 92.

⁷⁹⁰ Matthew 27.45; Mark 15.33; Luke 23.44-48.

⁷⁹¹ Raw, 1990: 135-6; Schiller, 1972: 109

⁷⁹² Schiller, 1972: 108-9; see also Hauteceour, 1921; Deonna, 1947; 1948.

century Arenberg Gospels and Ælfwine's Prayer Book.⁷⁹³ In the ivories, they are articulated as small *clipea*, differentiated by finely carved lines, but although depicted in less elaborate form than the manuscript versions, they nevertheless denote similar iconographic responses.

To a smaller extent, the figures of Longinus and Stephaton, New and Old Testament figures, souls and mortals make up the remaining space in these scenes, adding their own iconographic components but these are not as extensively used, likely because these act as embodiments of a narrative, therefore distracting the viewer from the purpose of the themes emphasised by the Benedictine Reform. The sheer number of extra figures, no matter their purpose or identification, however, suggests residual artistic tendencies from the earlier centuries being transferred into smaller, less crowded (but no less significant) ivory compositions.

5.4 Conclusions

The scholarship published on the iconography of the ivories of Anglo-Saxon England has long assumed that the schemes were copied from those found on the Continent. The work of more recent scholars such as Hawkes, O'Reilly and Gannon working on the iconography of other media in Anglo-Saxon art, however, has suggested that this was not the case, and that liturgical, theological and exegetical conventions played a significant role. In the light of this, the reassessment of the ivories presented here, largely (and of necessity) as an overview, has indicated that their iconographic schemes also express concerns relevant to the time and place of production while demonstrating the wide-ranging sources the centres of production had access to. This observation is perhaps unsurprising given the cross-Channel traffic enjoyed throughout most of the period. What stands out, however, is that from the later ninth and early tenth centuries the iconography of the ivories exhibits deliberate choices made in keeping with contemporary (and local) liturgical and theological developments. Rather than creating new schemes or copying existing ones, images were adapted to articulate responses to current concerns.

This is particularly notable in the ivories of the late tenth to mid-eleventh centuries, no doubt as a result of the Benedictine Reform. At this point, the ivories reflect changes in

⁷⁹³ New York, Morgan Library & Museum: MS 869, fol. 9v; London: British Library, Cotton Titus D.xxvi & xxvii, fol.

both function and meaning. Rather than using biblical narrative as had been the case previously, the ivories produced under the auspices of the Reform focus on the figures of the Christ in Majesty, the Virgin Mary and the Crucifixion. It is in these later ivories that more generalised themes are expressed through the enthroned Christ (exuding power, influence, and the assertion of Church Law), the Virgin Mary (mother and queenly Intercessor), and the Crucified Christ (whether 'Isolated' or accompanied), highlighting themes of devotion and adherence to the reformations of the later Anglo-Saxon Church. Given this, it is worth turning to consider, in closing, how use of the ivory itself may have enhanced these iconographic schemes, given the long-standing association of the material with value and luxury.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSIONS:
THE SUBSTANCE OF ANGLO-SAXON IVORY

6.1 Introduction

Having reviewed the manner in which the Anglo-Saxon ivories have been studied within the wider context of Anglo-Saxon art histories, and Art History generally,⁷⁹⁴ it has become clear that the major approach to the carvings was stylistic analysis, by which date and provenance were attributed. While this has laid valuable foundations for our understanding of these rather neglected objects of Anglo-Saxon art, it has been marked by a tendency to ignore Anglo-Saxon comparanda, a disregard of the central economic and symbolic value of the material of ivory, and with few exceptions, a focus on style at the expense of other art historical approaches, such as the iconographic or iconological studies.

Reassessing the styles in which the ivory carvings were articulated, in the light of the varied trends identified as current at different times during the Anglo-Saxon period, has confirmed many of the dates suggested in previous studies, while also proposing new dates for those carved on the reverse of earlier phases of activity; it has also suggested that in many cases an Anglo-Saxon provenance is at least as likely as a continental origin.⁷⁹⁵ Likewise, the iconographic overview of the earlier ivories demonstrated dependence on a range of early Christian prototypes, often of varying Mediterranean origins, which were adapted in keeping with local needs and concerns. This was particularly the case with the later ivories of the Benedictine Reform when the range of subjects focused (for the most part) on three specific iconographic themes: Christ in Majesty, the Virgin and the Crucifixion.⁷⁹⁶

In many ways the stylistic and iconographic variety displayed by the ivories confirms the evidence for the cross-cultural links that flourished in England throughout the early medieval period. Considering the evidence for this phenomenon in the light of the ivory being carved in the region, it has become clear that the three types of ivory used (elephant, whalebone and walrus) were exploited as part of a continuum that valued the

⁷⁹⁴ Chapter 2.

⁷⁹⁵ Chapter 4.

⁷⁹⁶ Chapter 5.

white and shining substance as an exotic luxury – an appreciation inherited and highlighted in literary sources.⁷⁹⁷

As was set out in Chapter 3, the substance of ivory was used as an artistic medium for centuries before it was adopted by the Church. Having been used so prolifically in pagan belief systems, as well as by the wealthy Roman elite, it is not difficult to see the ease with which the material was adopted by the Church to express the wealth, luxury, and grandeur of their culture. In the Mediterranean, ivory remained an available commodity despite any fluctuations in market value, and being so geographically close to the major African and Indian ports and trade routes, the opportunity to trade and give as gifts such a valued material was exploited throughout the medieval period. However, this was not the case for regions such as the Insular world, and Anglo-Saxon artists seem to have accessed the material (for the most part) by chance or on an opportunistic basis. The changing sources, types of ivory, the exchanging and re-carving of old ivory to make it ‘new’ reflect the perceived value of the material, and therefore the carved compositions, within the wider Anglo-Saxon oeuvre. By reappraising these ivories against this background it can be seen that the medium was used as a conduit, considered at least as appropriate as precious metalwork, by which to present the Divine and the secular.

6.2 The Divine and the Secular

As set out in Chapter 4, the Franks and Gandersheim Caskets and Larling panel fragment are typically invoked to demonstrate (variably) the talents of the ivory carvers in Anglo-Saxon England, yet the Gandersheim Casket (cat. 6), with its non-figural ornament has presented scholars with something of a quandary concerning its iconography and function. Made of whalebone and decorated with framed panels of quadrupeds, birds and serpents, long familiar in the decoration of secular metalwork,⁷⁹⁸ the iconographic significance is perhaps best viewed as a series of visual references to universal themes. Webster, for instance, has argued that the grids of six and twelve laid out on each side of the casket are crucial numbers in Christian cosmology, referring to the framework of a universe created by the Divine: the six days of Creation, the hours of the day and months of the year (Fig. 6.1A,B). The roundel at the bottom centre of the back of the Casket stands out in this

⁷⁹⁷ Chapter 3.

⁷⁹⁸ For more, see: Hinton, 1974; Coatsworth & Pinder, 2002; Gannon, 2003.

arrangement, composed of six running trumpet scrolls emerging from a central seventh, while in each corner, a small creature crawls outwards, the symbolism potentially referring to the divinely created cosmos, and the four creatures inhabiting the four corners of the world (Fig. 6.1C).⁷⁹⁹ If this is indeed the case, the polished surface of the Casket, accentuated by (originally shining) bronze would have reinforced the importance of such iconographic themes.

Likewise, the Franks Casket (cat. 2) fuses (more clearly in its subject-matter), apparently secular and Christian material on a whalebone casket whose original function remains obscure. Invariably across the scholarship, the suggestion has been of either royal or ecclesiastical manufacture – unsurprising given the close relationship between the two spheres of influence in the region during the Anglo-Saxon period. Most recently, Webster has suggested it was made by ecclesiastical craftsmen for a member of the ruling secular elite, encouraging contemplation of the nature of kingship, important in a culture where kings were encouraged to view their conversion as bringing divine protection and political advantage.⁸⁰⁰ Thus examples of good and bad rulers are juxtaposed with episodes articulating the theme of exile, something experienced by many Northumbrian rulers. The images of Romulus and Remus, cast out as infants, the Jews exiled from Jerusalem, along with Weland consigned to imprisonment (Fig. 6.2A-D), all address the theme.⁸⁰¹ Overall, it would seem, the iconography expresses themes of secular and ecclesiastical concern, actions and the consequences, good (Christianity) triumphing over evil (bad deeds and ill-advised rulers). The bone of the beached whale from which the whole was constructed actively incorporates and re-presents these ideas giving them extra emphasis.

The Larling panel fragment (cat. 3, Fig. 3.20), has been discussed primarily (albeit in passing) in terms of its connections with continental sources of inspiration due mainly to its stylistic, technical and iconographic details. Nevertheless, the fragment displays an iconographic scheme that expresses both ecclesiastic and secular concerns. The image of Romulus and Remus, also displayed on royal coinage (and thus deemed to express secular frames of reference, Fig. 4.19), is juxtaposed with the vine-scroll and a cross – the symbol of the Church. By this means, connections are made between rulers in exile receiving

⁷⁹⁹ Webster, 2012a: 108.

⁸⁰⁰ Webster, 2012b: 50; see above Chapter 3.

⁸⁰¹ *Ibid.*: 51.

sustenance and those in the Church receiving spiritual nourishment. With these three pieces therefore, a material valued for its exoticism – whalebone – has been used to complement visual forms and themes relevant to those of the highest status in Church and State.

Equally significant in this respect are the ivory seal-dies of late Anglo-Saxon England. Of the four extant examples two are made of copper alloy and two of walrus ivory: the seal-die of Godwin and Godgytha (cat. 51) and that of Wulfric (cat. 52), both dating to the first half of the eleventh century.⁸⁰² These are inscribed with similar phrases: “+SIGILLVME GODWINIMINISTR” (Fig. 6.3A),⁸⁰³ “+SIGILLVM GODGYDEMONACHED’ ODATE” (Fig. 6.3B),⁸⁰⁴ and “+SIGILLVM WVLFRICI” (Fig. 6.3C).⁸⁰⁵ As Schofield has outlined, the designation ‘SIGILLVM’ was significant as this practice of declaring the object the seal of *X* or *Y* remained a peculiarly English practice until the late eleventh century.⁸⁰⁶ The word itself was a diminutive of *signum*, loosely translated as sign or token, which in the case of the charters of Edward the Confessor, the earliest known sealed documents in Anglo-Saxon England, seem only to have given authority to the individual on the sigillant’s business; in other words, they authenticated the messenger, not the message.⁸⁰⁷ In this case, authentication of the document lay in the list of signatories whose names were preceded by small crosses, *signum crucis* or more simply, *signum*, which developed into signifying the signatory’s confirmation of the contents of the document through the sign of the cross.⁸⁰⁸ The *sigillum* on the Anglo-Saxon seal-dies therefore, Schofield argues, is not an indication of ownership of the physical seal itself, but rather a reference to the *sigillum crucis*, which invested status in the authentication of the document.⁸⁰⁹

⁸⁰² One of the copper alloy dies is designated: “SIGILLVM AELFRICVS” (The ‘sign/seal’ of Ælfric), and has been associated with Æthelred II due to its resemblance with the ‘First Hand’ coins struck between 979-85; see further Webster & Backhouse, 1984: 111.

⁸⁰³ “The ‘sign/seal’ of Godwin the Minister”; this translated by the British Museum as ‘the thegn’, “GODWINIMINISTR” suggests it is more accurately translated as ‘Godwin, the minister’. Schofield, 2015: 2.

⁸⁰⁴ “The ‘sign/seal’ of Godgytha, a nun given to God.”

⁸⁰⁵ “The ‘sign/seal’ of Wulfric”; see further Backhouse, Turner & Webster, 1984: 114, cat. no. 113, fig. 113; Braarvig et al., 2004; Schofield, 2015: 2.

⁸⁰⁶ Schofield, 2015: 2

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid.

The word ‘SIGILLVM’ and the small crosses therefore act as iconographic motifs, but as with all artistic production at this time, this offers just one level of interpretation. The decoration of the seal-die of Godwin and Godgytha, for instance, demonstrates that its use was not restricted to ecclesiastical activities. While the reverse of the handle of the seal-die is plain, the front is carved with high-relief figures of God the Father and the Son, their feet resting on a prostrate human figure (Fig. 6.4A). The tip of the handle is broken away but the remains of a damaged dove, symbolising the Holy Spirit, completes the Trinity image.⁸¹⁰ But below the Trinity, on the circular portion of the seal-die, and carved to imitate a coin of Hathacnut who ruled between 1039-42 (Fig. 6.4B,C), is the figure of a bearded man with a sword. Surrounding this is the reversed inscription that refers to Godwin the ‘Minister’. Typical of the early Anglo-Saxon use of Latin and Old English interchangeably, the Latin word ‘Minister’ here is used synonymously with the Old English ‘Thegn’, which translates roughly to ‘one who serves’. Referring to a wide spectrum of possible social statuses however, it usually referred to someone who served a king in both an administrative and military role; becoming prominent in ninth-century West Saxon charters, towards the end of the Anglo-Saxon period a ‘minister’ or ‘thegn’ held a substantial amount of power, including owning significant bookland, representing the king in shire meetings and even possessing their own seal.⁸¹¹ While the sword could reference the royal coinage of the period, it could also allude to the familial or (previous) professional status of the owner – in this case Godwin’s role as a ‘minister’. Godgytha’s inscription and image was added for her reuse on the reverse of the seal-die (Fig. 6.5), making it possible that Godwin may have been the founder or benefactor of a religious house, with Godgytha as his wife or daughter who used the seal, and in doing so Godwin’s social status and power were transferred to her by proxy.

The small handle or flange above the circular face of the Wulfric seal-die appears to depict either a pair of fighting beasts or an *amphisabaena* (a two-headed creature that consumes itself); in the centre is a bearded warrior brandishing a shield in his right hand encircled by the inscription with the cross place above and to the left of the head (Fig. 6.6A). While there was a Wulfric who was abbot of St Augustine’s, Canterbury (d. 1061), contemporary with the seal-die, the aggressive attitude of the figure depicted suggests that

⁸¹⁰ For extensive discussion, see Raw, 1997.

⁸¹¹ *PASE*, glossary webpage. For more see Loyn, 1955, 1957.

the seal may not have been connected with an ecclesiastic. While it is thus more likely that it belonged to a member of the secular elite, Wulfric was a common name, and there is no way of knowing whether he was, for instance, associated with the abbot's family living in the Canterbury area.

In summary, the iconography of these seals expresses a fusion of secular and ecclesiastical, but one that apparently emerges from the most elite of social circles. In this context the choice of material, ivory over metalwork, must have been deemed a suitable expression of wealth and status while simultaneously declaring their faith and association with the Church.

6.3 Embellishing Ivory

In addition to considering the symbolic value of ivory used to enhance the secular and the ecclesiastical iconographies a number of the Anglo-Saxon ivories that were embellished by staining, paint and precious metals (Table 6.1) are also worth considering. This had been a common practice since antiquity,⁸¹² but evidence from the Anglo-Saxon ivories has always been slim as later collectors had a tendency to either 'clean' them or add materials that were of a later date.

Cat. No.	'Subject'	Date	Embellishment
7	Last Judgment	Late 8 th /early 9 th century	Eyes and details likely inlaid with glass beads, one survives.
16	Nativity	Late 10 th / early 11 th century	Eyes inlaid with black beads, possibly jet.
21	Alcester Tau-Cross	Early 11 th century	Pierced holes for insertion of pearls or other jewels, traces of gilding.
25	<i>Agnus Dei</i> Tau Cross	Late 10 th / early 11 th century	Dark brown staining evenly seen over entire ivory.
30	Virgin & John the	Late 10 th / early 11 th century	Eyes inlaid with black beads, possibly

⁸¹² See Chapter 3.

	Evangelist	century	jet.
31	Pectoral Cross	Early 11 th century	Holes for gold plating, traces of pigmentation.
32	Seated Figure in Majesty	Early 11 th century	Traces of pigmentation, originally gold plated.
33	Virgin & Child Enthroned	Early 11 th century	Holes for gold plating, traces of red and blue pigmentation.
34	Crucifixion Reliquary	Late 10 th century	Crucifix mounted on gold cloisonné with gold filigree and enamels on a cedar wood core.
35	Crucifixion Reliquary	Late 10 th century	Mounted in gold filigree, pearls and precious stones.
36	Crucifixion	Late 10 th / early 11 th century	Holes for gold plating.
37	Crucifixion	Late 10 th / early 11 th century	One surviving eye inlay of jet, holes for gold plating.
38	Crucifixion	Late 10 th / early 11 th century	Holes for gold plating, rough ground suggests gold leaf or foil was used.
39	Crucifixion	Late 10 th / early 11 th century	Holes for gold plating, traces of pigmentation on front and back.
40	Crucifixion	Late 10 th / early 11 th century	Holes for mounting to a book or gold plating.
42	Crucifixion	Late 10 th / early 11 th century	Holes for mounting to a plate or backing to hold in relic.
43	Crucifixion	Late 10 th / early 11 th century	Holes for mounting to a book or gold plating.
44	Crucifixion	Late 10 th / early 11 th century	Traces of pigmentation, presumably gold plated.

Table 6.1: Carved Anglo-Saxon Ivories and their Surviving Embellishments⁸¹³

In terms of colouration, there is ample evidence (documentary and archaeological) for the practice of the polychromatic ornamentation of carved stone in early medieval England. Indeed, the earliest (and only) mention of stone carving in Anglo-Saxon England,

⁸¹³ In each case the figures illustrating the polychromy and embellishments are composed of overlays and additions (© Lyndsey Smith, 2014) imposed on photographs of the ivories.

by Bede, is made in a discussion of painted wooden panels in his early eighth-century commentary on the Temple.⁸¹⁴ In the early ninth century, Æthelwulf was to describe a stone figure of the Virgin in his *De Abbatibus* as being “glorious in white robes and with an elegant mingling of different colours”,⁸¹⁵ and in the tenth century, Ælfric mentions in his *Colloquy* that stone crosses carved on church walls were painted.⁸¹⁶ Likewise, the Old English poem *Andreas* also mentions the carving of angels, describing them as “wondrously carved, beautifully wrought and brightly adorned”,⁸¹⁷ recalling the highly coloured carved stone angel dated to the early ninth century recovered at Lichfield in 2003 (Fig. 6.7).⁸¹⁸

Against this background of the polychrome embellishment of carving across the Anglo-Saxon period, it is possible to consider the six of the ivories that preserve traces of colour:⁸¹⁹ the *Agnus Dei* Tau-cross (cat. 25, Fig. 4.26); the Pectoral (cat. 31, Fig. 6.8); Seated Figure in Majesty (cat. 32, Fig. 6.9A); the Virgin and Child Enthroned (cat. 33, Fig. 6.12); and two Crucifixions (cat. 38, 39; Fig. 6.13A,B). The Christ in Majesty is perhaps one of the best-known and finest examples of such treatment,⁸²⁰ but the most interesting aspect of the ivory is the multiplicity of colours: a blue background, red lips, pink hands and feet, and gold embellishments elsewhere, likely inspired by the colourful illuminations of the period (Fig. 6.11B,C). While it seems that none of the pigmentation has yet been tested to ascertain its age, the coloration is still relevant to our understanding of what might have been a larger enterprise of the deliberate and colourful embellishment of ivories in Anglo-Saxon England.⁸²¹ In addition to such elaborate polychromy, eighteen of

⁸¹⁴ Rodwell, et al., 2008: 48-108; Ó Carragáin, 2005: 257-61.

⁸¹⁵ “in uestibus albis/ inclita, sed uario omptim permixta colore,/a dextris uirgo”. Campbell, 1967: 202-4.

⁸¹⁶ “cruces sculpte parietibusque ecclesie atque porticorum picte sunt”. Stevenson, 1929: 100; see also Gameson, 1992: 85-102.

⁸¹⁷ “swylce he wraetlce wundoragraefene anllcnesse engla sinra geseh, sigora frea on seles wage, on twa healfe torhte gefraetwed, wlitige geworhte.” Krapp & Dobbie, 1931-53: 454-5.

⁸¹⁸ Rodwell et al., 2008. Further corroboration of the originally painted nature of Anglo-Saxon sculpture been found at found at Monkwearmouth/Jarrow, Burnsall, Stonegrave, Kirklevington, Lancaster, Deerhurst, Reculver, and Ipswich; see further Cather et al., 1990.

⁸¹⁹ It has been suggested that the pigments used on stone, manuscripts and ivories may yet be linked and show a trend of colourful embellishment but this has yet to be fully studied. Williamson & Webster, 1990: 177-94.

⁸²⁰ Ibid.: 177.

⁸²¹ For an extended discussion of the embellishment of ivory in antiquity and continental empires, see Connor, 1998.

the fifty-seven surviving carved Anglo-Saxon ivories dating from the seventh to eleventh centuries (including the six painted pieces) retain traces of original additions in the form of precious metals, gems and stones selected to enhance their value visually; such embellishments would have highlighted (literally) the ivory and its carved subject.

Through the use of holes drilled in most of these ivories, delicate inserts and metal plating could have been attached, along with precious gems, semi-precious stones, gold leaf and polychromy; the numerous holes and their (at times) jagged edges tells a story of a multiplicity of lives for many of these objects: attachment to a manuscript cover or large reliquary, or a portable reliquary or pectoral cross (Fig. 6.11, 6.12, 6.13, 6.14). Looking closer at the Last Judgement (cat. 7, Fig. 6.15A), a glass bead survives in the gable above the heavenly angel's head suggests that the entire border as well as certain aspects of the composition would have been embellished similarly. The Nativity (cat. 16), the Virgin and John the Evangelist (cat. 30), and Crucifixion (cat. 37) all retain at least one tiny, round piece of jet, a popular semi-precious stone used for the depiction of eyes in many ivories, most of which have been lost over the centuries leaving only the small, empty pierced cavities (Fig. 6.15B-D). Finally, the Alcester Tau-Cross possesses larger pierced cavities that would have likely held substantial precious and semi-precious stones, like pearls or gems, along with surviving traces of gilding or gold leaf (Fig. 6.16).

Conversely, some pieces of ivory were themselves used to adorn other materials in Anglo-Saxon England, for instance, the Crucifixion Reliquaries (cat. 34, 35), seen by their addition of ivory figures of the Crucified Christ. One of these (cat. 34) was set on an Ottonian reliquary cross and it is clear from the shaping of the filigree wire and the overlay of gold holding Christ's halo and *suppedaneum* in place that they were made for each other (Fig. 6.17A,B).⁸²² The other Crucifixion Reliquary (cat. 35), on the other hand, began life as a carved Anglo-Saxon ivory relief created in the eleventh century (ascertained stylistically) that was subsequently added to a reliquary of the Circumcision, covered by rock crystal, and mounted in a silver-gild triptych dating to the early sixteenth century (Fig. 5.73).⁸²³ Although much abraded this provides a glimpse at the extremely long-standing value invested in (Anglo-Saxon) ivory.⁸²⁴

⁸²² Williamson, 2010: 239-41, cat. 60.

⁸²³ Beckwith, 1972: cat. 31, fig. 67.

⁸²⁴ For more, see cat. 35 entry.

Less familiar is the practice of embellishing other objects of sixth- and seventh-century date with ivory. Excavations from Boss Hall and Eriswell, (Suffolk), Chessel Down (Isle of Wight), York, Kempston (Bedfordshire), Dover and Wrotham (Kent),⁸²⁵ and Sutton Hoo have all produced pieces of metalwork enhanced by ivory.⁸²⁶ Inlays in metalwork were by no means unusual, but were generally composed of garnet, enamelling, and other stones, while white inlays typically consisted of shells or magnesite, but during a study of the white inlays of thirty-eight brooches held by British Museum three were found to contain ivory inlays (Fig. 6.18),⁸²⁷ and Grave 93 of the Boss Hall Cemetery produced two more examples: a brooch and a gold-alloy pendant (Fig. 6.19 & 6.20).⁸²⁸ One other example is highlighted in the catalogue as being a rare and unique use of walrus ivory being used as an embellishment on a sheet of copper alloy (cat. 49, Fig. 6.21). Unlike the small roundels or chips of ivory used as inlays in the metalwork described above, this walrus ivory disc is carved in high relief with a quadriform symmetrical design: four contiguous arcs with foliate flourishes are arranged within a plain border, and at the point of contact between the arcs are finely carved zoomorphs with deeply drilled eyes; within the arcs the fields are filled with paired animals facing each other in the upper register, and in the lower, two addorsed beasts. The disc is attached by two rivets to a damaged sheet of copper alloy with the back plate severely degraded and two dome-headed rivets remain from the attachment of this piece to a larger object (of unknown size, shape, or purpose). In addition, there are traces of heavy gilding and some staining of the ivory from the metal.

Seemingly insignificant, these few ivory examples of small inlaid embellishments on intricate metalwork comprise a mere fraction of the known, and scientifically tested, inlays, could suggest that ivory could have simply been chosen because it was close to

⁸²⁵ These comprise three disc or composite brooches, three square headed brooches, two gold pendants, a buckle and gold-alloy pendant; for full accounts, see: La Niece, 1988: 235-36; West, 1998; O'Brien, 2002; Scull, 2009: 80.

⁸²⁶ Ivory found in Mound 1, 17, 48. Bruce-Mitford, 1978: 300-3; Evans 2005, 244, fig. 102; Stoodley, 2015: 33.

⁸²⁷ Not illustrated here are two of the three held by the British Museum: 1963,1108,826 and 1879,1013,1. A fourth plated disc brooch shows a similar material to the others which have been conclusively tested as ivory, but due to degradation it was not possible for this example. It is however plausible that this fourth object was inlaid with ivory as well, see London, British Museum: 1963,11-8,758 for more. For full study, see La Niece, 1988: 235.

⁸²⁸ Scull, 2009: 80, 82.

hand and happened to be white. On the other hand, it is also possible that ivory was selected because of the valuable connotations of the material as the survival of the larger walrus ivory disc, as well as ivory crucifixions being added to crosses made of other materials, shows that the practice might have been more widespread and diverse in its scope. In fact, this might be the more likely explanation: because ivory materials are so few, and because the supplies of shell and magnesite were so numerous this would suggest that the choice of ivory, finite in its availability, was deliberate and likely was crafted from pieces of varying size or shape, forcing the craftsman to be particularly creative in their final forming of such multi-media projects.

6.4 The Perception of the Ivory Crucifixion

In addition to such glimpses of the value of ivory being expressed by such means, the use of ivory to portray the subjects favoured repeatedly in the late Anglo-Saxon carvings gives yet another level of comprehension as to the perceived significance of the material in early medieval England. Mentioned briefly in Chapter 5, of the fifty-seven ivories included in this corpus, sixteen present the crucifixion of Christ (whether as the entire composition, or as part of a multi-scene object), making it the most popular narrative to present in ivory.⁸²⁹ The importance of this event within the Christian Church cannot be overstated, however the proliferation of such images within extant Anglo-Saxon ivories is interesting and suggests that forces beyond liturgical or exegetical teachings were at work, and in typical Anglo-Saxon fashion, certain localised perceptions are expressed through these ivories.

The synoptic accounts of this event all describe the strange natural phenomena of darkness that covered the earth “between the sixth and ninth hour”; Matthew 27.45, Mark 15.33 and Luke 23.44-45 all tell of a darkness falling at the moment of death,⁸³⁰ emphasising in almost the exact same language the sky turning black, with Mark and Luke relating that the daytime darkness accompanied the rending of the veil in the Temple, while Matthew adds the details of the earthquake and the opening of graves. Darkness was also associated with suffering, mourning and judgement in the Old Testament, where

⁸²⁹ Cats. 12, 21, 22, 34-46. These range in date from the late ninth to early eleventh century.

⁸³⁰ Matthew 27.45: *a sexta autem hora tenebrae factae sunt super universam terram usque ad horam nonam*; Mark 15.33: *et facta hora sexta tenebrae factae sunt per totam terram usque in horam nonam*; Luke 23.44-45: *erat autem fere hora sexta et tenebrae factae sunt in universa terra usque in nonam horam, et obscuratus est sol et velum templi scissum est medium.*

numerous examples compare God's judgement with darkness, including those voiced by Jeremiah 15.9, Zephaniah 1.15 and Joel 2.2, 31. Moses' (Exodus 10.22) plagues also included a "horrible darkness" covering "all the land of Egypt for three days".⁸³¹ In the books of Tobit and Samuel two striking examples (among the many others) exemplify the connection between sin, wickedness and darkness: Tobit 4.11 suggests giving alms to deliver oneself from sin and death, where the soul will then not "go into darkness",⁸³² while 1 Samuel 2.9 describes the terrible vengeance of God and the powerlessness of men, whereby "the wicked shall be silent in darkness, because no man shall prevail by his own strength".⁸³³

It is within this wider biblical tradition of associating sin, wickedness, judgement, death and mourning with darkness that the account of the Crucifixion rests: the Son of God, was crucified between sinners, accused of treason, judged by Pontius Pilate, condemned to death, and mourned by those closest to him, during which time darkness covered the earth. Considering the biblical scene, and the complex visual choices that had to be made taking into account current exegetical, theological and liturgical practices in Anglo-Saxon England, the dark nature of the crucifixion contrasting with the whiteness of the ivory is a difficult initial sell. The selection of ivory, a naturally light and white organic material that shines when polished, here takes on considerable iconographic significance.

Biblical references to lightness and whiteness were often set alongside those that emphasised darkness: Tobit 13.22 describes the streets of Jerusalem as being paved "with white and clean stones";⁸³⁴ Ecclesiastes 9.8 speaks of ways to live an honest life, one of which is to "at all times let thy garments be white";⁸³⁵ and in Revelation 4.4 and 19.14 all the martyrs and saints are clothed in white, while the armies of Heaven wear white and ride on the backs of white horses.⁸³⁶ In the Gospels, key events in the earthly life of Christ

⁸³¹ Exodus 10.22: *extendit Moses manum in caelum et factae sunt tenebrae horribiles in universa terra Aegypti tribus diebus.*

⁸³² Tobit 4.11: *quoniam elemosyna ab omni peccato et a morte liberat et non patietur animam ire in tenebras.*

⁸³³ 1 Samuel 2.9: *pedes sanctorum suorum servabit et impii in tenebris conticescent quia non in fortitudine roborabitur vir; see also Revelation 6:12.*

⁸³⁴ Tobit 13.22 *"ex lapide candido et mundo omnes plateae eius sternentur".*

⁸³⁵ Ecclesiastes 9.8 *"omni tempore sint vestimenta tua candida".*

⁸³⁶ Revelation 4.4 *"et in circuitu sedis sedilia viginti quattuor et super thronos viginti quattuor seniores sedentes circumamictos vestimentis albis et in capitibus eorum coronas aureas"; 19.14 "et exercitus qui sunt in caelo sequebantur eum in equis albis vestiti byssinum album mundum".*

are associated with light and whiteness in terms that signify more than just colour. The most often quoted example of this transfigural language is found in John 8.12: “Again therefore, Jesus spoke to them, saying: I am the light of the world: he that followeth me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life”.⁸³⁷ But the Transfiguration, Trial of Christ, Resurrection and Ascension are all moments marked by brilliant light or shining light. At the Transfiguration (Matthew 17.2, Mark 9.2, Luke 9.29), Christ was transfigured “And his face did shine as the sun: and his garments became white as snow”,⁸³⁸ during the Trial (Luke 23.11) Christ is clothed in “a white garment”,⁸³⁹ at the Resurrection the Angels watching over the sepulchre are described as clothed in light garments (Matthew 28.3, Mark, 16.5, Luke, 24.4, John 20.12) associated with snow, white and shining,⁸⁴⁰ and at the Ascension two men in white address the Apostles, assuring them of the future return of Christ as Judge (Acts 1.10).⁸⁴¹ In each instance the shining light and brilliant white function as a means of expressing Christ’s (salvational) heavenly nature, and it is perhaps not coincidental that each of these moments centre on the Crucifixion.

It is of note that in the early church in Anglo-Saxon England, it was the Resurrection that offered the hope of eternal life, but by the eleventh century, man-kind’s salvation depended solely on Christ’s death and as such the importance of the cross can be inferred from the large numbers of crosses owned by churches and monasteries recorded from this period,⁸⁴² significantly, it is to this late tenth and eleventh-century mind-set that fifteen of the sixteen ivory crucifixion scenes of this discussion can be linked. While some of the ivory crucifixions were likely embellished further with polychrome, glass or jet beads or even gilded copper,⁸⁴³ it must be also taken into account that the overall sizes of each crucifixion, at least those which are the main element of the overall carving (rather than part of a Tau-cross head for example), with one or two exceptions are small, meant

⁸³⁷ John 8.12 “iterum ergo locutus est eis Iesus dicens ego sum lux mundi qui sequitur me non ambulabit in tenebris sed habebit lucem vitae”.

⁸³⁸ Matthew 17.2 “et transfiguratus est ante eos et resplenduit facies eius sicut sol vestimenta autem eius facta sunt alba sicut nix”.

⁸³⁹ Luke 23.11 “sprevit autem illum Herodes cum exercitu suo et inlusit indutum veste alba et remisit ad Pilatum”.

⁸⁴⁰ Matthew 28.3 “erat autem aspectus eius sicut fulgur et vestimentum eius sicut nix”.

⁸⁴¹ Acts 1.10 “cumque intuerentur in caelum eunte illo ecce duo viri adstiterunt iuxta illos in vestibus albis”.

⁸⁴² Raw, 1990: 40-41.

⁸⁴³ See further, above Table 6.1.

for personal reflection. The intimate nature of these crucifixions, whether they were used for the decoration of smaller ecclesiastical books or hung about the neck as a pectoral cross, not only allows the holder the opportunity for close contemplation upon the event of the crucifixion, but also emphasises, at least within the Anglo-Saxon world, the importance of the event itself and its place within the wider exegetical consciousness that emphasises the ultimate source of salvation and everlasting life that the crucifixion offered. The white ivory crucifixes of Anglo-Saxon England therefore become less of a memorial or literal interpretation of the event of the crucifixion, and rather more a message of the effect or results of the event – the holy and pure sacrifice of Christ for the salvation of all mankind.

Here, while the iconography is clearly full of meaning, it is rather the iconology that is significant, as the purpose of the creation and perceived value of these ivories to the Anglo-Saxon audience was clearly at the forefront of their artistic output, with ivory as a medium becoming a meaningful tool to express the message of the Crucifixion while placing even more value in it with the use of a high status and expensive material.

6.5 Summary

Considering the wider implications of the materiality of ivory, the embellishment of, and with, ivories strongly suggests that such practices were a part of the wider artistic output current among the Anglo-Saxon elite. Secular and ecclesiastical gift-giving involving precious and elaborate objects, the decorating of religious objects and buildings, and embellishing objects with precious metals, gems and polychromy within ecclesiastical contexts raises no doubt that such activities hinted at the correlation between the heavenly and earthly Church. The liturgy certainly stressed the connection between the heavenly and the earthly,⁸⁴⁴ and the Old English *Maxims* recorded that “if gold was fitting on a man’s sword, it was equally so on the ornaments of the Church”.⁸⁴⁵ The combination of an exotic luxury medium like ivory with costly products of gold, silver and jet, and other elaborate embellishments certainly recalls the accounts of the heavenly Jerusalem, with its

⁸⁴⁴ Raw, 1990: 9-10; for further discussion of the ways in which the earthly Church in Anglo-Saxon England was deemed to be linked to the heavenly, see Blair, 2006; Foxhall-Forbes, 2013.

⁸⁴⁵ *Maxims* 1, 125: Gold geriseþ on guman sweorde, sellic sigesceorp, sinc on cwene, god scop gumum, garniþ werum, wig towiþre, wicfreoþa healdan. Clemons, 2006: 8.

focus on the precious stones inset in the walls of the City.⁸⁴⁶ Generally speaking, however, the nature of ivory seems to have acted to inspire and exploit such associations, being both the earthly remains of mortal creatures and a substance inherently white and shining that embodied luxury and the exotic. Overall, this chapter has (briefly) examined the value of the substance of Anglo-Saxon ivory, examining the iconographies depicted in ivory and how the carved motifs were connected to their physical surface by local Anglo-Saxon perceptions of secular, ecclesiastical, social, cultural and economic value. While the extant examples examined here are but a portion of the wider group of fifty-seven ivories, in their consistent presentation of embellishment and expression of ‘precious’ iconography, they present what was likely a wider practice of valuing ivory and its carved motifs *together*, rather than appraising them as separate entities.

6.6 Conclusions

In the introduction of this study it was established that previous scholarship concerning the ivories of Anglo-Saxon England has been, in a word, lacking. While scholarly efforts since the 1950s has improved our understanding of these objects somewhat, with the likes of Dodwell, Hawkes, Webster and Gannon (to name a few) employing traditional art historical concepts and methods alongside newer multidisciplinary attitudes in their own studies of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, metalwork, stone and numismatics, the fact remains that Beckwith’s 1972 *Ivory Carvings of Early Medieval England* was the only presentation of the group in monograph form, until now. One of the key factors pushing the production of this study has been the ignorance or avoidance of these objects by scholars since *c.* 1750, producing an atmosphere in which an entire medium (seen as luxurious and valued on several levels) is not brought to bear within wider studies on Anglo-Saxon art, allowing for the proliferation of generalised statements on the ivories when they are actually mentioned. Despite this, and as clearly seen in the preceding chapters, the ivories of early medieval England display an extensive amount of particularly Anglo-Saxon artistic conventions, establishing a link, through their physical, social and cultural value, to the wider creative output of the period in Anglo-Saxon England.

In closing, it is interesting to explore the possible future avenues of expansion and inquiry provoked by this study. First, and most obviously inspired by the information

⁸⁴⁶ Revelation 21.19.

brought out in Chapters 3 and 6, the discovery of new ivories from either archaeological contexts or from private hands would add to the corpus, and therefore our overall knowledge of the ivory production of this period. In that same vein, other objects ‘found’ or published from the Anglo-Saxon period generally in other media would also enhance (or even possibly contradict) the arguments from this thesis, as all such new objects do for periods that have so little provenance or written corroboration. Equally important to acknowledge, are the topics that, due to word count, have not been introduced or fully addressed here, but that would make for interesting further study. One such topic is the broader context of the total extant corpus of whalebone and walrus ivory carvings, a topic that was laid out in Chapter 3 within the confines of early medieval England. These objects were not created in a vacuum as the evidence on the Continent, Scandinavia and Russia attest, and by looking at the objects within archaeological, economic and art historical terms, a more expansive view might be made of the acquisition, trade and creative uses for the materials between *c.* 650 and the thirteenth century. Along the same vein, the Crucifixion groups of Chapter 6 were explored specifically in reference to the context of the Benedictine Reform in Anglo-Saxon England, but analysing these ivories against the broader background of reformed attitudes and artistic production across Europe generally would make an interesting study in its own right.

In addition, and most importantly to this study, more work needs to be done to address the serious lack of information and wider contextual publication on the ivories of Anglo-Saxon England; it would no doubt enhance the understanding of the place, purpose and function of ivory as a medium in early medieval Britain and Ireland, but it also would allow for a greater understanding of the artistic practices of craftsmen in Anglo-Saxon England generally, breathing new life into a complex subject that too often restrains itself in addressing one or two media over any others.

In conclusion, it is perhaps admissible at this juncture to suggest that the arguments proposed within this study allow for not only a greater (multidisciplinary) understanding of the ivories of Anglo-Saxon England, but of the arts and perceptions of such creative practices in early medieval England generally, especially in terms of economics, style, iconography and the ‘valuing’ of an artistic medium, specifically ivory. While viewing such assertions through the lens of modern viewers and academics might be considered dissimilar to what the actual awareness of such concepts was within Anglo-Saxon England

*c.*500 – 1066, there is nevertheless the sense that such thematic elements did carry some weight in a pre-art historical sense; much in the same way that the ivories are valued by scholars, curators and the public today, the same can be said about the ecclesiasts, patrons and craftsmen of early medieval England, and as such this study provides some sort of connection across the centuries, bringing value and esteem back to the ivories included here.