ICONOGRAPHY IN DIALOGUE

NEGOTIATING TRADITION AND CULTURAL CONTACT IN THE ART OF SEVENTH CENTURY ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

TWO VOLUMES

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VOLUME I

ABSTRACT

The seventh century in Anglo-Saxon England offers a particularly rich historical period in which to examine the material effects of cultural contact between disparate cultures. As it lacks close contemporary textual accounts of the events taking place and the cultural response to the resultant changes, the material record becomes the site upon which that dialogue plays out. This study is primarily concerned with the art of what might be considered a transitional period in Anglo-Saxon England, the seventh century, between the arrival of the papal mission from Rome in 597 CE and the beginning of the eighth century when Christianity seems to have become well established throughout much of the region. At its core, this study is intended to present an iconographic, art historical examination of the artwork produced in this historical period, focusing predominantly on decorated metalwork, specifically personal ornament, as a medium for the transmission of iconography. To that end, given the scope of the historical events and material artefacts encompassed within that time period, it will focus primarily on traditional iconography, the so-called Germanic motifs, and their persistence and resurgence in response to the incoming Mediterranean influences. The artwork, specifically the metalwork, demonstrates a valuation and retention of longstanding traditions, both iconographic and aesthetic, which seem to be in direct response to the introduction of a competing culture. This embracing of tradition does not mean that significant cultural change was occurring throughout the seventh century, nor does it necessarily indicate a societal resistance to that change; however it does reveal that there was a level of uncertainty about the changes taking place and a resultant desire for the familiar, symbolic and significant traditions of the remembered past.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

The work contained in this thesis is the author's own. It was developed between October 2009 and November 2014. It is the original work of the author except where specifically acknowledged by reference.

Introduction: Defining Cultures and the Power of Tradition

Art has been seen as a means of communication for human experience for as long as it has been analysed as part of scholarly discourse.[1] Although most commonly described, today, as the expression or application of creativity and technical skills, it is also the product of human workmanship and agency.[2] Artistic expression, especially that which survives in tangible form, can therefore be seen as an encapsulation of the social, historical, and cultural context in which it was made.[3] With this in mind, the art of a historical period can be understood to represent a societal reaction, or at least that of part of the society, to the events and experiences of that time. Essentially, visual art can be approached as a contemporary account of a historical culture. This visual record, which commonly survives on, or as, a number of objects and artefacts, becomes particularly important for an historical period that, for whatever reason, lacks other contemporary sources of information, such as surviving textual records.

At its core, this study is an iconographic examination of a series of common image motifs found ornamenting artefacts of a specific historical time period, namely seventh-century Anglo-Saxon England. These motifs will be identified, described with attention to the variations of each type, demonstrated to have a level of pervasiveness within the contemporary culture, and finally analysed for potential meaning and purpose. As the main concern is with the image motifs themselves, rather than the specific objects they ornament, any artefact which bears the motif in some form could be utilised to support the interpretation. Given the scope of this study, a comprehensive examination of all the material remains that bear iconographic motifs from the seventh century would be

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[1] For discussion of this see Davis, 1993
[2] 'Art', OED
[3] Marcus and Myers, 1995: 1-14; Hatcher 1999: 1-2

overwhelming, despite the relatively limited corpus of extant artefacts. For the purposes of this study, therefore, the selection process was primarily practical: the objects selected for analysis are those which offer the clearest, most legible examples of each image motif type, and they were drawn from the metalwork objects, the medium that predominates the extant corpus of seventh-century art in Anglo-Saxon England. Admittedly, this often has the result of appearing to prioritise higher status objects made from more valuable materials and perhaps ornamented with a defter hand, but this is mitigated by the fact that each key case study is supported by examination of several other artefacts ornamented with comparable iconography but offering variations of material composition, date, find location, and/or abstraction of the imagery in order to help demonstrate the circulation of each image motif within Anglo-Saxon society; in some cases this has involved discussion of objects produced by Germanic peoples from the wider European continent, to illustrate the distinctive (or otherwise) manner in which the motif types on the various objects created in Anglo-Saxon England were treated.

Further to this, it is notable that the region broadly defined as modern-day England, especially between the period of Germanic migration and settlement in the fifth century and that of conversion and Christianisation through the seventh century, lacks contemporary textual accounts of events but preserves a corpus of material remains, much of which was ornamented.[4] The art therefore provides significant body of evidence pertaining to the people who made it.

Here and throughout this study the term Anglo-Saxon is used to describe the Germanic society, and its attendant culture, which settled in Britain (in England) during the fifth century, supplanting the sub-Roman society of the province that preceded it.[5] It is

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[4] For a discussion of the non-visual sources of information about Anglo-Saxon England and their limitations see Chapter 1: 23-29

[5] For further discussion of sub-Roman Britain see e.g.: Gibbon, 1906; Shotter, 1998; Snyder, 1998; Gerrard, 2013

intended as a cultural rather than ethnic designation as there is evidence of a number of Germanic peoples, including but not necessarily limited to the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes named in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*.[6] Following Anglo-Saxon settlement in Britain, the culture and social structures traditional to the Germanic peoples, as well as any that were altered or hybridised through contact with late Romano-British society, came to be established in the region, and continued, with their transmission to ensuing generations.[7]

However ubiquitous the Anglo-Saxon traditional modes of cultural expression, particularly artistic ornamentation, were in the period prior to the major cultural contact of the seventh century, they did not exist in cultural isolation. Anglo-Saxon England, through policies of trade and diplomacy, had economic and political contact with the residual British territories to the west, the 'Celtic' kingdoms of the British, the Picts, the Scots, and the Irish, the Romanised former provinces on the Continent, and even the Byzantine capital and its near-eastern territories.[8] A clear example of such cultural contacts can be seen in the use of coins in sixth- and seventh-century England; no longer seen as functional objects, they were valued as objects of exotica.[9] Nevertheless, despite the residual survival of some sub-Roman influences and contact with other external cultural powers, Anglo-Saxon England remained, overall, traditionally Germanic in its cultural practices.

The seventh century saw the impact of cultural contact between two distinct cultural systems with the conversion to Christianity in the region. The Germanic culture, by then traditional, was set in counterpoint to the culture introduced, or re-introduced, by

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[6] For more on this see: Bede, *HE* I.15 (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 48-53); John, 1996: 4-6; Wood, 1997:41-44; Harris, 2003: 84-86

[7] Shils, 1981: 15

[8] For discussion of the evidence of a post-Roman economy of imports see: Huggett, 1988. For discussion of the political interaction between Anglo-Saxon England and its British, Celtic, and Continental neighbours see e. g.: Stenton, 1971: 59-60; Yorke, 1990: 28-30; John, 1996: 18, Cusack, 1998: 96; Kirby, 2000: 34-45; Wood, 2003: 48-49; and the essays in Graham-Campbell and Ryan, 2009

[9] For a discussion of the role of coins in early Anglo-Saxon England see Chapter 1: 43-48

the papal mission: one infused with classical, Mediterranean, late antique influences which was transmitted through the aegis of the seventh-century Church. Although emerging in a late classical context in the Mediterranean world, and so influenced by that cultural framework, Christianity came to prominence within the socio-political setting of late antiquity, during the fourth century; thus both its internal hierarchy and its understanding of political interaction with the secular world reflect that particular time.[10] Furthermore, as it developed primarily in the geographic region of the Mediterranean basin, early Christianity also reflects the cultural influences associated with that region. However the vast territorial tracts of the Roman Empire ensured that this 'Mediterranean' culture was disseminated far beyond the geographical boundaries of the Mediterranean Sea.[11] Rome exported its cultural inheritance to its provinces and newly conquered territory alongside its technological advances, systems of governance, and means of artistic expression, where it melded with local customs and culture. The result was that regions as disparate as Northern Africa, Asia Minor, and Gaul all shared a Mediterranean, classical Roman-influenced culture that informed their traditions and practices even after Imperial power had, in effect, collapsed. This meant that there might be cultural contact with 'Mediterranean' culture without any contact to the geographical Mediterranean – as was the case with Anglo-Saxon Kent and Frankish Gaul in the later sixth century.[12]

Here, it should be noted that although religion played a significant role in events during the seventh century in Anglo-Saxon England, it will be considered in terms of its cultural influence rather than any specific belief system. Thus, the cultural contacts explored in this study will be those made between traditional Germanic Anglo-Saxon culture and the Christian culture characterised by its Mediterranean origins in the classical

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[10] For more in depth discussion about the terminology underlying this see e.g. Southern, 1953: 15-73; Lowden, 1997; Bowerstock *et al*, 1999: vii-ivx; Wickham, 2005: 1-16; James, 2008: 20-30
[11] Millet, 1990a: 35-41. For discussion of the Romanisation of Britain see: Salway, 1981; Jones, 1996
[12] This is reflected in Saxl and Wittkower, 1948, which opens with an account of Anglo-Saxon art

Roman Empire and further developed within a late antique socio-political context. That culture is indistinguishable from the papal Christian religion but had an impact beyond that of the religious observances of the Church. As such, it will be referred to here, variously, as classical, late antique, and Mediterranean: all three terms accurately describe the cultural inheritance of (although no single term encompasses all the cultural influences at work), seventh-century Christianity as embodied in the cultural institution of the Church.

In part, this is because the focus of this study is the effect of the sustained cultural contact between traditional Germanic Anglo-Saxon and Mediterranean-influenced Christian cultures on the art and material culture of the region in the seventh century. One result of the artistic negotiation of this cultural dialogue has long been regarded as the development of 'Insular Art', a term applied to the art produced in the cultural milieu of Britain and Ireland,[13] which incorporates influences from the artistic traditions of the entire region and the Mediterranean influence embedded in early Christian art. Although some of the material that will be discussed can be viewed in an Insular context, for the purposes of this study, the primary interest lies in the dialogue between traditional Anglo-Saxon components and newly introduced Christian ones during the period when 'Insular art' was emerging.

Also relevant to this study is the debate within contemporary sociological scholarship concerning societal reaction to large-scale cultural and social change.[14] This concerns the ways in which cultural change, in any society, brings issues of societal and personal identity, group interaction and perceptions of that society to the forefront of

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[13] Broadly speaking, Insular Art is loosely defined as the art of the British Isles and Ireland between, roughly, the seventh and the tenth centuries. It is definitively post-Roman and loses momentum with the arrival of the Viking period; however most of the parameters for defining what can be considered 'Insular' are somewhat fluid. For an excellent discussion of the terminology see the introductions to Spearman and Higgitt, 1993, and Hourihane, 2011.

[14] Bourdieu, 1985: 728; Zárate *et al.*, 2012: 635

cultural consciousness;[15] by definition it forces a cultural response by means of assimilation, acculturation, or multicultural coexistence.[16] Of interest in the scholarship is the way in which cultural change can also result in a kind of cultural trauma, a disorientation caused by the fundamental societal shifts and loss of stability that are irrevocably tied to significant change.[17] A response to such cultural shifts might reasonably be expected to involve resistance or inertia, efforts to, in some small way, defy that change by reinforcing a cultural identity associated with the period before that change.[18] One possible way to accomplish this has been identified as a group seeking to reaffirm its identity through their cultural heritage and traditions. In this respect a cultural heritage is defined as the legacy, tangible and intangible, of specific groups of people, traditions so to speak, which had been inherited from earlier generations, preserved by the present generation, to be passed on to future generations.[19] Traditions are thus considered to provide a tangible link to a shared past that, regardless of the historical reality of that past, helps establish a group identity.[20]

Although this discourse arises from modern concerns with change in contemporary society, it is not implausible to assume that such societal anxieties could mark historic cultural shifts that resulted in dramatically changed societies.[21] In other words, any moment of significant historical change may also be considered a site of cultural discontinuity, where social identity and cultural practices are felt to be threatened.[22] At that point, the material culture can either shift to reflect that cultural change, or become entrenched in "tradition". Both visual art and literature can be seen to be an expression of

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[15] Zárate *et al.*, 2012: 634
[16] Berry, 1984: 11-27; Zárate *et al.*, 2012: 634
[17] Sztompka, 2000: 453-459
[18] Zárate *et al.*, 2012: 635
[19] Shils, 1981: 12
[20] Shils, 1981: 12-14; Hobsbawm, 1983: 1-4
[21] Bloch, 1954: 32-39; Carr, 1961: 108; Le Goff, 1980: xiii-xvi; 2005: 1-5; Shils, 1981: 185; White, 1982: 120-121; Innes and McKitterick, 1994: 193-220; Lemon, 1995: 4-10; Wickham, 2005: 1-7; Tosh, 2006: 168-169; Woolf, 2011: 1-7
[22] Davis, 1979:35; Tannock, 1995: 456; Sztompka, 2000: 453-456

a cultural response within a historical society, such as Anglo-Saxon England in the seventh century. They offer different perspectives on a societal reaction to socio-political or cultural change. In order to examine this cultural shift it is important to identify the conditions that existed prior to period of change, that which was in essence, traditional, and track its persistence or extinction as new cultural influences are introduced. For the purposes of this study, therefore, the shift (or lack thereof) will be traced primarily through the visual art, predominantly through the visual motifs on the metalwork.

The potency of traditional, or even perceived traditional, cultural expressions within a society in flux should not be underestimated, providing, as they do, a sense of stability and connection despite whatever change is at work. It will be argued that there was a sense of ambiguity embedded, along with that nostalgic potency, within the traditional, Germanic image motifs found in early Anglo-Saxon art. This ambiguity, deliberately enhanced by the abstraction of the forms, dense patterning, and even an object's very materiality, allowed the imagery to have a multivalency of meaning driven by the viewer's set of experiences and cultural context. It was the ambiguity (and its associated multivalent meanings) that enabled the distinctive and traditional aesthetic forms and iconography to be re-appropriated and re-contextualised as new cultural influences were introduced and gained ascendency in the transitional period of early Anglo-Saxon England.

To this end, the cultural landscape of seventh-century Anglo-Saxon England will first be contextualised, both within its contemporary setting and within the ensuing scholarship. This period of Anglo-Saxon history was highly transitional, representing a shift from one type of culture to another, with a dramatically different societal structure and means of cultural expression. This has resulted in, historically, a split in the focus of scholarship, being either centred on the earlier Germanic material or interested in the

resultant change following the conversion to Christianity. However recently there has

been a trend, of which this study is part, to examine and analyse this transitional art and its

symbolic significances in its own right.[23] Although conversion, in this sense, is used to

denote a religious change,[24] the cultural shift experienced was on a much wider scale, one

that resulted from the contact with and, arguably, the clash of two disparate and competing

cultural models: traditional Germanic, as established by the centuries of Anglo-Saxon rule,

and classical Mediterranean, as embedded in the Church and its apparatus. As noted,

societal change can often be read in the artistic expressions of the period in response to the

competing cultural influences and pressures placed upon the population. In seventh-

century Anglo-Saxon England the artistic response to those pressures was a seeming

opposition to the newly introduced Mediterranean influence and the endurance of

traditional, or perceived traditional, iconography and aesthetic.

Following discussion of these issues, a selected set of iconographic motifs will be

examined, motifs found in seventh-century Anglo-Saxon England that were both

traditional and those that were inspired by the introduction of Mediterranean Christianity.

It is by no means intended to be a study of all the iconographic types and variations found

at this time; rather, it will offer case studies of specific motifs in order to explore their

cultural associations and purpose as well as possible symbolic associations as a means of

coming to an understanding of the ways in which the cultural changes of the time were

negotiated (particularly given the lack of documentary sources charting such events). In

focusing on the traditional imagery of zoomorphs, the commonalities of the

representational motifs amongst multiple Germanic societies, as well as Anglo-Saxon

innovations can be traced. Using six specific animal types: the boar, the horse, the bird,

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[23] For a discussion of the historiographical framework of the scholarship of early Anglo-Saxon art see
Chapter 1: 12-23

[24] Hefner, 1993a: 3-5; Tilley 1995: 63; Higham, 1997: 3-5; Fletcher, 1997: 6-9; Urbanczyk 2003: 17; Carver,
2005: 3-4

the serpent, the fish, and the dragon, as well as depictions of the human figure, it will be demonstrated that a representational and stylistic formula can be identified for each motif which renders the iconography recognisable regardless of any abstractions. The traditional, formulaic style of this art, as opposed to a more naturalistic representation found in classical Mediterranean art, imbues it, as mentioned above, with a sense of ambiguity that allows more nuanced and multivalent interpretation of the motif and enables the viewer's experience of the art to be dictated by their own, personal set of cultural contexts.

In identifying the traditional iconographical motifs employed in seventh-century Anglo-Saxon England it becomes possible to begin to interpret the significance of the imagery. Although an exact interpretation of the meaning of each iconographical type is impossible, given the lack of contemporary textual records, it can be argued that the deliberation involved in the portrayal of each motif, as well as the type of objects it ornamented, suggest a specific set of significant and symbolic associations. Analysis of the use of the image motifs, in particular the specific forms of motifs, suggests that, while the iconography was often deliberately ambiguous and the significance multivalent, the form, be it truncated, abstracted or full-length, and placement of the imagery informed the symbolic meaning mapped out in each case through the use of the image motif.

With this in mind, the materiality of seventh-century metalwork displaying these motifs will be considered, particularly the significance mapped onto the traditional use of gold and garnet. It will be argued that in a society that valued indications of wealth and prized preciousness, the choice to deliberately use specific materials is imbued with meaning. Gold and garnet, as materials, and the aesthetic of metalwork itself were strongly associated with Anglo-Saxon traditions and a sense of potency due, in part, with that connection to the past, which could be appropriated by new media or used in new

contexts to help make the alien more familiar, but also to articulate the value of the new in a recognisable manner. To fully explore these issues, some of the literature, primarily Old English poetry, associated with Anglo-Saxon England will also be considered, on the understanding that the literary and artistic impulses of that society can be seen as analogous articulations. Although the use of Anglo-Saxon literature, including Old English poetry, can be problematic in studying early Anglo-Saxon England, given its much later date of production or recording, the parallel processes of cultural response can be relevant.[25] This syncretism in the artistic expressions of Anglo-Saxon England presents similar cultural responses to events and changes taking place within that society.

Indeed, it will be argued that the complexity and layered patterns that typify much of seventh-century Anglo-Saxon art are meant to be perceived by a viewer in a manner akin to the reception of Old English poetry. First, meaning shifts as a visual interpretation adjusts while the eye moves over the dense iconography, much as a reader or listener's understanding shifts as they proceed through a poem or riddle. Second, the layered and often shifting zoomorphic interlace and patterns serve as sensory reminders of a viewer's engagement with the natural world, much as the exphraic descriptions found in Old English poetry serve as vivid reminders of a sensory experience. These aesthetic effects are both dependant upon and enhanced by the materiality of the ornamented artefacts.

In closing, the iconographic and aesthetic/material output of seventh-century England is revisited in order to identify specific motifs that persisted and were reinterpreted within the new cultural landscape brought about in the century of cultural contact and dialogue between Germanic traditions and Christianity. Again, the analysis is not intended to be comprehensive but through the several case studies the process of cultural transition being mapped onto the motifs can be investigated. Of particular interest

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[25] A more in depth discussion of the use of literature and textual sources with regard to seventh-century Anglo-Saxon England can be found in Chapter 1: 23-29

here is the way in which the iconography may have been reinterpreted in order to situate these traditional motifs within Christian frames of reference. The traditional aesthetic of gold and garnet metalwork can also be seen as a means of traditions transitioning into a new symbolic framework, particularly in its approximation in other media, in manuscripts and sculpture, newly introduced to Anglo-Saxon England and indelibly linked to the Mediterranean, Christian, late antique cultural milieu.

The seventh century in Anglo-Saxon England offers a particularly rich historical period in which to examine the material effects of cultural contact between disparate cultures. As it lacks close contemporary textual accounts of the events taking place and the cultural response to the resultant changes, the material record becomes the site upon which that dialogue plays out. The artwork, specifically the metalwork, demonstrates a valuation and retention of longstanding traditions, both iconographic and aesthetic, which seem to be in direct response to the introduction of a competing culture. This embracing of tradition does not mean that significant cultural change was occurring throughout the seventh century, nor does it necessarily indicate a societal resistance to that change, however it does reveal that there was a level of uncertainty about the changes taking place and a resultant desire for the familiar, symbolic and significant traditions of the remembered past.

Chapter One – Culture in Context

1.1 Anglo-Saxon Art in Context

In order to analyse and examine early Anglo-Saxon art it is necessary to contextualise it within two frames of reference: the historical framework within which it was created, and the scholarly approaches taken to interpret it. Like any body of art, it did not exist within a vacuum and an appreciation of the historical events, cultural practices, and aesthetic traditions is key to understanding the artistic choices made, which in turn can illuminate societal reactions to the significant historical shifts and cultural changes of the time. Indeed, as so little contemporary textual information survives for early Anglo-Saxon England, the visual material perhaps provides one of the most important sources of evidence for reactions to the cultural upheavals that marked the seventh century.

1.1a Scholarly Approaches

Having said this, little of the scholarship on this material has elucidated this in any demonstrable way, rather, it has focused predominantly on two distinct and distinctive periods of art and the styles characterising them: that of the 'migration period', commonly associated with the fifth and sixth centuries, and that produced after the conversion period of the seventh century. With the coming of Christianity to England, literacy and the written word came to be widely promoted in both secular and ecclesiastical circles,[1] such that the transition from oral to written left a record of the society and culture of the artwork created. It is thus not surprising that Anglo-Saxon art from the post-conversion period is widely studied. By contrast the pre-conversion art remains part of the dimly illuminated period of oral tradition only recorded by outsiders, such as the Roman historian Tacitus in

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[1] Wormald, 1977: 95-114; Kelly, 1990: 36-37; McKitterick, 1990: 8; Hawkes, 1997: 311-312; Higham, 1997: 107; Leith, 1997: 16

the first century, or much later when literacy was more commonplace.[2] This lack of cotemporary textual sources, paired with the comparatively limited range of objects surviving from the migration period, was, for a long time, an obstacle to studying and understanding the earlier phase.

The art itself is found predominantly on pieces of metalwork which have survived burial in graves and hoards;[3] and although the detailed linear patterns and zoomorphs decoration (interlace)[4] may also have ornamented more organic, and so ephemeral media, such as textiles, wood and bone or ivory, few examples of such objects survive.[5] Moreover, until relatively recently, the metalwork and its decorative programmes were considered primarily as indicators by which the migration and settlement of the Anglo-Saxons into the old Roman province of Britannia could be charted.[6] This meant focusing on apparent changes in the form and style of the artefacts and their decoration. In an art historical context, "style" has been understood to denote the form, conventions, qualities, and expressions of an individual or group at a particular time and place,[7] but in the context of Anglo-Saxon art,[8] perhaps more traditionally the purview of the archaeologist than the art historian, its 'style' has been closely analysed and compared to other examples deemed to exhibit similar (or dissimilar) decorative features, both within Anglo-Saxon art and in that of other, Germanic, regions.

[2] Yorke, 1990: 23-24; Campbell, 1995: 36; Hawkes, 1997: 311-312; Leith, 1997: 16-17; Hunter Blair, 2003: 2

[3] Bruce-Mitford, 1975: 375-435; Dodwell, 1982: 3-4; Evans, 1986: 23-29; Geake, 1997: 107-136; Hines, 1997b: 382; Lucy, 2000: 1-3; Taylor, 2001: 136-137; Hunter Blair, 2003: 64; Meaney, 2005: 239-240; Hoggett, 2010: 80-85

[4] Dodwell, 1982: 24-27; Wilson, 1984: 62-67; Hawkes, 1997: 314-316; Budny, 2001: 183-185; Hull, 2003: 25-26; Webster, 2003: 11-30

[5] Speake, 1980: 1; Dodwell, 1982: 6; Blair, 2011: 732; Leahy, 2011: 445

[6] Åberg, 1926: 159; Munro, 1946: 128-158; Speake, 1980: 7-9; Conkey, 1989: 118-130

[7] Munro, 1946: 128-158; Schapiro, 1953: 287; Gombrich, 1968: 130; Speake, 1980: 1-5; Fernie, 1995: 361; Elsner, 1996: 103-105; Karkov and Hardin Brown, 2003b: 1-10; Hawkes, 2011b: 205-206

[8] Alpers, 1987: 137-140; Nees, 2007: 1-17

The pioneer of this type of study of Germanic 'style' in early Anglo-Saxon art was Bernhard Salin in his 1904 book, *Die altgermanische Thierornamentik*.[9] Here, he undertook an extensive study of Germanic art, specifically the animal ornament on brooch forms and metalwork from the fourth to ninth centuries.[10] In this, he defined three consecutive styles, which became foundational in archaeological and art historical studies of Anglo-Saxon and wider Germanic art as Salin's Style I, II and III.[11] Style III, however, is not relevant to the study of early Anglo-Saxon art, as it appears mainly on Scandinavian objects after the eighth century, and will therefore not be discussed further in this study. With exhaustive attention to detail, he articulated his phases of development by means of a series of schematic drawings (Fig. 1.1), which, in essence, chart shifts in the ways certain body parts of animals were used to decorate the metalwork.[12] He concluded that the earliest type of ornament, Style I, had its roots in Roman art and began to appear in the early-fifth century,[13] and it is typified by depictions of animals whose bodies have been broken down into individual components or elements that are rearranged as abstracted pattern;[14] little or no attempt was made to depict a naturalised animal form. Style II represents a clear evolution from this apparently earlier style, and emerged at the beginning of the seventh century.[15] It is characterised by a more sinuous and serpentine form of animal ornament as well as distinctive forms for animal heads, joints, and feet or paws. Overall, the zoomorphs of Style II are more clearly articulated than the abstract,

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[9] Salin, 1904

[10] Salin, 1904: 214-290; Åberg, 1926: 159-160; Bakka, 1958: 4; Chadwick-Hawkes, 1961: 68-70; Speake, 1980: 10

[11] For discussion of Style I and II see Salin, 1904; Åberg, 1926; Lindqvist, 1926; Holmqvist, 1955; Chadwick-Hawkes, 1961; Bakka 1958; Haseloff, 1974: Speake, 1980

[12] Salin, 1904: 214-290; Holmqvist, 1955, 24-42; Speake, 1980: 10-13

[13] Salin, 1904: 128; Holmqvist, 1955: 19; Haseloff, 1974: 1-7; Speake, 1980: 13-16

[14] Haseloff, 1974: 7-11; Dickinson, 2005: 163

[15] Åberg, 1926; 1943; Hills, 1979: 322-325; Speake, 1980: 17; Høilund Nielsen, 1999: 185-202

'exploded' Style I creatures, and the patterns created thus appear more controlled and coherent.[16] Nevertheless, there is still no attempt to create a naturalistic animal.[17]

Although published more than a century ago, Salin's work has continued to dominate the discussion of early Anglo-Saxon art, even if only to classify more closely various phases of the style shifts between Style I, Style II. Haseloff, for instance, broke down Style I into four phases, A, B, C, and D, to better chart the transition to Style II.[18] He was mostly concerned with Scandinavian examples but his distinctions have been applied to Anglo-Saxon art. Thus Bakka, in tracing the impact of Salin's Style I in England, identified a type of ornamentation found on a specific type of fifth-century metalwork from Southern England, the Quoit brooch, which was designated as Quoit Brooch style.[19] Chadwick-Hawkes, on the other hand, classed the material by its supposed influence rather than the form on which it appears, designating it Jutish Style A.[20] By such means sub-categories of Salin's classes have been identified in the Anglo-Saxon art of the migration period.[21]

Perhaps because of its more adaptable form, Style II seems to have invited more attention and debate than other styles, particularly in relation to its origins, dates, and connection to Style I,[22] and just as Salin's categorisation of Style I was modified, so too has his Style II, with Åberg, for instance distinguishing 'Kentish Style II'.[23] Other scholars, however, like Bruce-Mitford, have remained fairly faithful to Salin's style categories, while addressing inconsistencies within the dating of the style shifts and the importance of the continental influence, especially in the light of the Sutton Hoo

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[16] Kendrick, 1934: 66-76; Holmqvist, 1955, 18; Haseloff, 1974: 1-15; Speake, 1980: 17
[17] Baldwin Brown, 1915: 329; Holmqvist, 1955: 48; Speake, 1980: 17; Hawkes, 1997: 317-318
[18] Haseloff, 1974: 8-11
[19] Bakka, 1958: 9; Inker, 2000: 25
[20] Chadwick-Hawkes, 1958; Halsall, 2013: 260
[21] Bakka, 1958: 28; Chadwick-Hawkes, 1958: 45; Haseloff, 1974: 11
[22] Kendrick, 1934: 190-191; Åberg, 1947: 38; Holmqvist, 1955: 42-48; Bruce-Mitford, 1964: 25-36; Speake, 1980: 17-37; Høilund Nielsen, 1999: 185-202; Dickinson, 2005: 163
[23] Åberg, 1926: 168-173; 1947: 158-159; Speake, 1980: 18

discoveries.[24] Regardless of whether these innovations were seen as novel, or refinements of Salin's categorisations, the commentaries on them have remained deeply dependent on the foundation provided by *Die altgermanische Thierornamentik*, so that its conclusions have been refined and amended to suit a different, more focused geographical region, rather than being revised in their entirety.

One exception to this general practice was Thomas Kendrick, who suggested a major modification in his discussion of the Anglo-Saxon incarnation of Salin's Styles I and II. He identified two styles in early Anglo-Saxon art: 'Helmet Style', which corresponds to Style I, being characterised by isolated and abstracted animal forms; and 'Ribbon Style', which correlates to Style II, comprising the more interlacing zoomorphs.[25] Kendrick's major innovation was to suggest that the two styles were not an evolution (one from the other) but evolved from two different sources and coexisted at the same time in Anglo-Saxon England, giving examples of sixth-century objects decorated with both Helmet Style and Ribbon Style.[26] In challenging the idea of stylistic evolution Kendrick revealed the inconsistencies of the theory of style evolution and the problematic nature of depending on such analysis to create a credible timeline for both artefacts and the settlement patterns of the people creating them. As a result, some scholars, like Wilson, have openly acknowledged the perils of creating chronologies on that basis;[27] others, like Speake, have attempted to move beyond style into an analysis of the iconography.[28] However, it remains the case that most of the scholarship of the twentieth century remained focused on creating a coherent narrative of the chronology of Anglo-Saxon art produced between the fifth and seventh centuries.

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[24] Bruce-Mitford, 1972: 80; 1978: 97-150; 1983: 387-390; Speake, 1980: 44-46
[25] Kendrick, 1934; 1938: 74-78; Speake, 1980: 18
[26] Kendrick, 1938: 86-87; Speake, 1980: 18
[27] Wilson, 1986: 15-16
[28] Speake, 1980: 77-92

More recently, however, a number of scholars have played down the thorny issue of style and moved on to new questions about the patterns, decoration, and imagery found on the objects. Rather than trying to discern where and when these objects were created, they have started to ask what the decoration is and why it was placed there, to consider the iconographic significance of the imagery, and discern what purpose the decoration might have served for the owner. Kitzinger, for instance, while expressing interest in style and being interested in locating the origins of some of the more distinctive zoomorphic patterns and interlacing,[29] paired such questions with an attempt to understand the Anglo-Saxon impulse for interlacing patterns looking to Christian points of view and juxtaposing these with ethnographic and anthropological perspectives to try and discover what meaning such patterns might have had for the Anglo-Saxons.[30] Webster, on the other hand, has merged analysis of the style and iconography of early Anglo-Saxon art to find correlations and relationships between pre-conversion pagan art and the Christian art produced in England after the conversion period.[31] In doing so, she attempts to view the imagery of Anglo-Saxon ornament as a visual language, with its own grammar and vocabulary that, given the right knowledge, can be read and understood by those attuned to it.[32] From that language, the questions of iconographic analysis, which address what the object might signify, how it does this, and who it addresses, can begin to be answered.[33]

Hawkes also addresses the iconographic questions posed by scholars like Kitzinger and Webster, leaving questions of style aside for the most part and approaching early Anglo-Saxon art as a symbolic language.[34] She argues that, while the modern viewer may have lost the ability to decode the meaning of the symbols of sixth- and seventh-century

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[29] Kitzinger, 1993: 3-12
[30] Kitzinger, 1993: 3
[31] Webster, 2003: 11-12; 2012: 13-67
[32] Webster, 2003: 12; 2012: 13-41
[33] Webster, 2003: 12-13; 2012: 29-34
[34] Hawkes, 1997: 312-318; 2003c: 266-278

pagan art, there may have been a deliberate emphasis on the ambiguity of the imagery even for a contemporary viewer.[35] Pirotte builds upon this idea of deliberate ambiguity, although she looks only at later, Christian material, primarily the carpet pages of gospel books, illustrating how patterns and images of crosses are deliberately buried within intricate interlace rather than placed in the foreground as might be expected,[36] an effect arguably analogous to that found on pre-Christian, Anglo-Saxon metalwork.[37] She stresses the value given to the ground of the image by Anglo-Saxon artists creating a dense visual maze from which the viewer can find the hidden pattern through close and contemplative visual examination.[38] As argued by Hawkes, however, a similar impulse is found in pre-Christian interlacing zoomorphs and one might suggest that the impulse for ambiguous symbols and hidden images is carried from the Anglo-Saxon tradition into the Christian period and to appear in the carpet pages of Pirotte's discussion.

Setting aside both the chronological ordering of artefacts, by means of their artistic and arguably Germanic style, and the symbolic interpretation of their iconography, a significant theme that arises in the study of Anglo-Saxon art is the sense of Mediterranean influence. Indeed, many of the early studies of Anglo-Saxon art were primarily concerned with identifying "Mediterranean style", as distinct from the native Germanic aspects, and in so doing were attempting to pinpoint and trace continental influences, specifically from Rome and Roman-influenced regions, upon the outpost of Empire.

In this respect Baldwin Brown played an important role in establishing such concerns with his six-volume collection, *The Arts in Early England*, published between 1903 and 1937.[39] Approaching encyclopaedic proportions, Baldwin Brown examined a wide range of objects, from architecture and sculpture, to painting, manuscripts, and

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[35] Hawkes, 1997: 314-317; 2003c: 275
[36] Pirotte, 2001: 203-205
[37] See Chapter 3: 188-194
[38] Pirotte, 2001: 205-206
[39] Baldwin Brown, 1903-1937

metalwork artefacts. The study was not limited to identifying and cataloguing this vast array of material objects and architecture, however, for in the later volumes he attempted to contextualise the artwork within the society that produced it and examine the wider historical setting.[40] Nevertheless, despite his focus on the arts and artefacts of England, Baldwin Brown looked to Rome and the Roman past in Britain to approach and analyse the artwork, as a means of situating the development of the 'English' arts.[41]

Contemporary with Baldwin Brown, Collingwood was probably the first scholar to examine a single type of Anglo-Saxon art in its own right, in his book *Northumbrian Crosses of the Pre-Norman Age*, published in 1927.[42] Following his early work with and on John Ruskin, and his subsequent studies of Anglo-Saxon sculpture in the *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*,[43] Collingwood set out to identify and catalogue the surviving examples of carved Anglo-Saxon stone from Northumbria; his aim was to establish the surviving corpus and trace the development of stylistic trends within it in order to identify those pieces produced under Scandinavian influence.[44] Thus, the overarching purpose of his study was to identify a coherent chronology, which could then be used to firmly date the objects. Yet even Collingwood's approach was inherently coloured by a familiarity with Roman and Mediterranean art and a tendency to look for Roman influence within the Anglo-Saxon stone, considering some of the more complete carved monuments, namely those at Bewcastle (Cumbria) and Ruthwell (Dumfriesshire) as reminiscent of late antique Roman sculpture and so exhibiting a style seemed to be more developed and skilled.[45]

Alongside Baldwin Brown and Collingwood it can perhaps be said that no Anglo-Saxon scholar, before or since, has been more overt in their preference for Roman culture

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[40] Baldwin Brown, 1903-1937; Breeze, 2001: 45-46
[41] Baldwin Brown, 1903-1937; Breeze, 2001: 45
[42] Collingwood, 1927
[43] Collingwood, 1907; 1909; 1911; 1915; See also Hawkes, 2007; Townend, 2014
[44] Collingwood, 1927; Orton, 2003: 38-40
[45] Collingwood, 1927; 69-70

amongst the Anglo-Saxons than Kendrick.[46] In his *Anglo-Saxon Art to A.D. 900* published in 1938, he attempted, as Baldwin Brown before him had done, to provide a comprehensive view of Anglo-Saxon art in all media. However, whereas Baldwin Brown and Collingwood were arguably looking for Roman influences in order to situate the artwork, Kendrick set up a clash between two visual modalities, 'Classical' and native, which he presented as responsible for the distinctive appearance of Anglo-Saxon art. He assigned the now pejorative term 'barbarian' to describe the more Germanic or native aesthetic which, in his terms, subverted and overwhelmed the 'Classical' (naturalistic and Roman) aesthetic.[47] For Kendrick, and to a lesser degree, his protégée Bruce-Mitford,[48] it was the importation, retention, perversion, and reintroduction of Mediterranean and Roman artwork, styles, and motifs, which characterised the development of Anglo-Saxon art.

What these approaches to Anglo-Saxon art reveal is the fact that the shadow of Rome was never far from scholarly attempts to identify, classify, and understand the artwork of Anglo-Saxon England. Moreover, with a few notable exceptions,[49] the study of Anglo-Saxon art has rarely been comprehensive and inclusive. More often, the scholarship looked at the artwork of a specific medium to assess the development, purpose or meaning of that type of object, and the Roman centred perception of the influences upon Anglo-Saxon art is carried over, if not always overtly, into these medium specific studies, presenting a view of Anglo-Saxon art coloured by a Roman lens. In fact, the scholarship of later Anglo-Saxon art often focuses on specific media, namely manuscripts and sculpture, while minimising the media of the so-called minor or 'decorative' arts of carved ivory, metalwork and coinage despite these being sites of significant iconographic

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[46] Kendrick, 1938
[47] Kendrick, 1938: 1-2, 5-8, 60, 77-78, 107-110, 221-222
[48] Bruce-Mitford, 1967: 822-825
[49] For general overviews of Anglo-Saxon art see Baldwin Brown, 1903-1937; Kendrick, 1938; Dodwell, 1982; Wilson, 1984; Henderson, 1999; Karkov, 2011; Webster, 2012

development, influencing and being influenced by the other more studied 'major' art forms,[50] coincidentally associated with the Mediterranean traditions of Christian artwork.[51] A medium specific approach to this later, post-conversion Anglo-Saxon artwork is perhaps best exemplified by George Henderson's extensive body of work.[52] In *Vision and Image in Early Christian England*, for instance, he attempts to erase the longstanding divide between Insular, including contemporary 'Celtic', and strictly Anglo-Saxon artwork, by prioritising manuscript art and referring to other types of artwork in his discussions.[53]

Within such medium specific accounts, however, it remains the case that the primary approach undertaken by scholars has also been marked by stylistic analysis in order to track the incorporation of the visual languages of the Roman, Mediterranean, 'Classical' traditions.[54] This type of approach can lead to a conclusion that the 'Classical' Roman motifs were successfully incorporated, as has been argued for the Lindisfarne Gospels by Michelle Brown,[55] or the reputably classically carved, figural decoration of stone crosses like those at Bewcastle (Cumbria), Ruthwell (Dumfriesshire), or Rothbury (Northumberland).[56] In part, this focus on styles reflects the on-going concern to date the material.[57] The quest for fixed dating is understandable, especially where so much of the documentary history is absent; if several firm dates can be established, stylistic comparison can then be used to date and contextualise other artwork. As Howlett has pointed out, however, as the manuscripts contain script and other Christian artwork sometimes had inscriptions, the examination of artistic style has often been secondary to

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[50] Webster, 2001; Henderson, 2007
[51] Laing, 1975: 346–351; Nordenfalk, 1977: 13–26; Wilson, 1984: 38–40; Stevick, 2010: 143-145
[52] Henderson, 1972; 1987; 1999; 2007
[53] Henderson, 1999
[54] Collingwood, 1927; Clapham, 1930; Kendrick, 1938; Neuman de Vegvar, 1987
[55] Godfrey, 1962: 183-184; Calkins, 1983: 63-78; Brown, 2003: 90–110; 2011: 114-116
[56] Collingwood, 1927; Kendrick, 1938: 171; Cramp, 1974: 115-140; 1978: 1-32; Bailey, 1996; Hawkes, 2003a: 66-99; see also Cramp, 1984; 2006; Bailey and Cramp, 1988; Lang, 1991; 2001; Tweddle *et al*, 1995; Coatsworth, 2008; Bailey, 2011; Bryant, 2012; Hawkes and Sidebottom, forthcoming
[57] Style has also been invoked to situate the art geographic as well as temporally. See for example: Nordenfalk, 1987; Netzer, 2001; Brown, 2007

analysis of paleographic and epigraphic styles.[58] Such dependence on style, the concern

with chronology, and the primacy of script has had a potentially limiting effect on the

study of the artwork itself. Compounding this has been a focus on those contemporary

texts that do survive, as a means of elucidating the art: drawing on contemporary Anglo-

Saxon literature, as Dodwell did so notably, to present the art, rather than focusing on the

art itself.[59] Michelle Brown has identified manuscripts bearing similar stylistic aspects and

argues that they were therefore all made within a related context in Mercia.[60] Cramp,[61]

Bailey,[62] and Lang[63] have likewise argued for schools of stone sculpture in Northumbria

and Mercia on this basis.[64]

More recently, the scholarship of post-conversion Anglo-Saxon art has also shifted

to include examination of the iconographic significance of the decoration and the purpose

of its use. O'Reilly, Farr and Pulliam, for instance, have utilised such approaches,

alongside more classificatory methods like palaeographic analysis and style comparison, to

examine early Anglo-Saxon manuscripts.[65] Likewise, Bailey looked at the iconography of

the sculpture alongside stylistic features both to locate a monument within a regional

school and identify and understand the stylistic significance of the carved image. Hawkes,

following Ó Carragáin, has also approached the monuments from an iconographic

perspective in order to unpick the complex visual messages being conveyed by the carved

decoration focusing primarily on figural work, but with some comment on the non-

figural.[66] Even metalwork, with very few inscriptions, has benefited from efforts to

address the objects in this way in an attempt to understand its syntactic frames of

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[58] Howlett, 1992: 71-93
[59] For fuller rehearsals of the argument than that summarised here, see: Dodwell, 1982; Cramp, 1991; Higgitt, 2002
[60] Brown, 1991; Brown, 2001: 278-294
[61] Cramp, 1977
[62] Bailey, 1980: 177-182
[63] Lang, 1991: 38-40
[64] See also Collingwood, 1927: 69-81; Bailey and Cramp, 1988: 67
[65] O'Reilly, 1994; 2009; Farr, 1997; 2003; 2015; Pulliam, 2006; see also Brown, 2000; 2003; 2010
[66] Ó Carragáin, 1978; 2005; Hawkes, 1997; 1999; 2003a; 2007; 2011a; 2011b

reference, with Youngs[67] and Gannon,[68] respectively examining metalwork generally and coinage specifically, invoking the rich and much overlooked iconography of this material to present clearer understandings of the type of imagery that likely resonated among early Anglo-Saxons and the complex meanings that might have been incorporated into the decoration of small, portable and everyday objects. Wamers has also combined an iconographic approach with that of stylistic analysis in his examination of some of the more challenging objects produced within the transitional period of on-going conversion, when the lines between pre- and post-conversion artistic ornamentation are less clearly defined, in order to demonstrate, convincingly, the problems inherent in assigning religious significance to a specific style of art.[69] He has thus been able to demonstrate how seemingly Germanic iconography, commonly associated with a pagan or non-Christian sensibility amongst the early Anglo-Saxons, can be understood to have Christian meaning in certain contexts.

While this brief summary does not fully elucidate the issues raised by the scholarship of early Anglo-Saxon art, it nevertheless serves to demonstrate some of the underlying trends. Principal among these has been the categorisation of the artwork in chronological and geographical terms. More recently, however, with the emergence and establishment of iconographic approaches to the arts of early England, the symbolic significance of the art displayed on the metalwork has been highlighted. The iconographic approach, while offering little in the way of a firm dating or provenance for an object, has enabled historians to consider the overall purpose of the decoration and try to uncover the meaning of the artwork rather than 'cataloguing' it according to form and style.

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[67] Youngs, 1993: 143-150; 1999: 281-295
[68] Gannon, 2003
[69] Wamers, 2009

1.1b Literary Sources

Against this background, this study is primarily concerned with the art of what might be considered a transitional period in Anglo-Saxon England, the seventh century, between the arrival of the papal mission from Rome in 597 CE and the beginning of the eighth century when Christianity seems to have become well established throughout much of the region. Obviously, the narrative of Anglo-Saxon England's conversion to Christianity is one of great complex and nuance,[70] but the century following the 'official arrival' of the Gregorian mission can arguably be characterised as one marked by the interaction of two distinctive and competing sets of cultural practices: the traditional Germanic and the imported Mediterranean.

In presenting a narrative of such cultural interactions in seventh-century Anglo-Saxon England, the sources upon which it is based must be explained. Generally speaking, the task of analysing an historical period is based on what can be discovered in contemporary records and utilising the details to create a coherent account.[71] The greater the number of contemporary sources, the more credible the account will be deemed to be, as multiple primary sources allow for comparison of events and people and even people's reactions or opinions;[72] in identifying points of overlap between the accounts it is possible to assume that the account is credible.

In this respect, the study of the history of seventh-century Anglo-Saxon England is fraught with problems, as there is a distinct lack of contemporary written primary sources. Prior to the arrival of the papal mission at the end of the sixth century, Anglo-Saxon Germanic society was characterised as having an oral culture, something that continued throughout the period even following the introduction of literate modes of communication and record. In the absence of these, however, events tended to be orally recounted and

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[70] For more focused and complete studies of Anglo-Saxon conversion to Christianity see: Chaney, 1967; Campbell, 1986; Wood, 1994; Mayr-Harting, 1999; Higham, 1997; Fletcher, 1998; Blair, 2005; Yorke, 2006
[71] Bloch, 1954: 40-57
[72] Hawkes, 1997: 315

knowledge of them was changed or lost over time unless recorded in some form.[73] This

has considerable impact on the modern scholar's access to resources that can be utilised to

construct a narrative of Anglo-Saxon England in the sixth and seventh centuries. The

number of documentary sources is limited, and those that do pertain to the period are

problematic in the accuracy of their accounts.

The accounts of the early Germanic peoples by Tacitus, for instance, which are

often invoked in the scholarship,[74] are those of a Roman historian writing in the first

century CE, and so have limited relevance to the culture and practices of early (fifth- and

sixth-century) Anglo-Saxons.[75] Both the *Agricola*, a biography of the Roman general

Gnaeus Julius Agricola, which includes geographic and ethnographic observations about

early Britain,[76] and *Germania*, an ethnographic record of the various Germanic tribes

encountered by the Romans,[77] are thought to have been written around 98 CE, more than

300 years before the Anglo-Saxons began settling in England. On the other hand, Gildas,

writing his *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae* in approximately 540 CE,[78] provides one

of the closest contemporary records of the time, post-dating the events it describes by only

100-150 years, focusing as it does on the very earliest phase of Anglo-Saxon activity in

Britain.[79] However, it is limited in its coverage (to the west of the country), and is written

from a distinctly Christian point of view that interprets the Britons as flawed Christians

with the pagan Anglo-Saxons wreaking God's divine vengeance on them.[80]

Likewise, Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, informing nearly every academic work

relating to Anglo-Saxon England, presents a decidedly Christian and Roman point of

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[73] Brown, 1991: 7; Davidson, 1993: 160 -161; Webster and Brown, 1997: 211; Orchard, 2003: 225-227; Amodio, 2004: 4-7; Niles, 2007: 53-58
[74] Speake, 1980: 81. See also: Howe, 2004; Toswell, 2010
[75] Chaney, 1970: 8-10; Yorke, 1990: 166-167; Stanley, 2000: 63-65; Harris, 2003: 21-28; Toswell, 2010: 27-62
[76] Tacitus, *De vita et moribus Iulii Agricolae* (Birley, 1999)
[77] Tacitus, *De Origine et situ Germanorum* (Birley, 1999)
[78] Gildas, *De Excidio* (Winterbottom, 1978: 1)
[79] Gildas, *De Excidio* (Winterbottom, 1978: 24-28)
[80] Wood, 1984: 19-22

view,[81] in its account of the English as part of the Roman Church.[82] Furthermore, being

written in the late-seventh/early-eighth century,[83] it post-dates the earliest events it

recounts by some three centuries; it also depends on other sources, such as Gildas, for

information on these events.[84] Unsurprisingly, it thus contains a number of significant

omissions, possibly due to a lack of credible informants to relate significant events, but

equally likely as a result of constructing the narrative to further serve its Roman, Christian

bias. For example, Bede whitewashes many of Wilfrid's more objectionable actions (such

as his lavish, aristocratic lifestyle as well as the extent of his conflict with Archbishop

Theodore of Canterbury over the splitting of the Northumbrian diocese which eventually

led to his banishment),[85] and neglects to mention the West Saxon Boniface's extensive

missionary work completely, despite devoting extensive description and praise to

Northumbrian missionaries;[86] both of these have been explained as efforts to downplay a

negative portrayal of Church figures regardless of their actions.[87] On the other hand, Bede

only tangentially refers to Mercia and largely excludes significant events (such as the

division of the diocese by Archbishop Thomas of Canterbury),[88] and these omissions have

been explained as a result of either a lack of access to information or perhaps political

bias.[89]

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*,[90] also invoked in the scholarship, presents a different

set of problems. It chronicles events in England from the Roman period up to the end of

the ninth century, when it was compiled, and was continued through to the twelfth century

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[81] For discussion of Bede's attitudes to Irish religious activities, not all of which are negative see: Goffart, 1988: 235-328; Thacker, 1996: 31-59; Higham, 2006: 53-63; Fraser, 2009: 266-267; Gunn, 2009: 36-67
[82] Kirby, 1992: 919; Higham, 2006: 122
[83] Bede, *HE* (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969); Frassetto, 2003: 62-64
[84] Lapidge and Dumville, 1984: 204; Goffart, 1988: 296-307; Meyvaert, 1996: 831-843; Frassetto, 2003: 118
[85] Campbell, 1986: 22-23; Thacker, 1999: 474-476
[86] Yorke, 2006: 22-23; Hoggett, 2010: 34-35
[87] Campbell, 1986: 20-23; Thacker, 1999: 474-476; Higham, 2006: 58-68
[88] Yorke, 1990: 100
[89] Yorke, 1990: 100; Higham, 2006: 155-168
[90] *ASC* (Plummer and Earle, 1892)

by means of various updates which amended the earlier text and added additional details for the subsequent entries.[91] However, the earlier history is heavily dependent on other primary sources, most notably Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*. The selective nature of Bede's account is thus inevitably reflected in the *Chronicles* and other later texts dependent on it. Apart from such 'historical' narrative sources, references to early Anglo-Saxon attitudes have also been identified in a number of 'non-historical' literary texts,[92] such as Old English poetry.[93] However, surviving versions of most Old English literature were written down only in the late-tenth and early-eleventh centuries. Nevertheless, it is likely that these later texts record earlier oral poetic traditions,[94] or copy earlier texts that have since been lost, as is the case with *The Dream of the Rood*. The poem given this title is preserved in the tenth-century Vercelli Book[95] but is thought to be a much earlier composition; an earlier version of verses preserved in the Vercelli poem are most notably found on the eighth-century Ruthwell Cross.[96] Ó Carragáin has highlighted other comparable verses preserved on the tenth-century Anglo-Saxon Brussels or Drahmal Cross and in one of the Exeter Book riddles written down at the same time as the Vercelli poem, demonstrating the widespread currency of such oral poetry.[97] Thus, many of the extant poems are understood to preserve aspects of earlier oral versions, and refer to earlier Germanic societal mores and their material culture.[98] For example, the descriptions of funerary practices found in *Beowulf* have long been regarded as a source of information

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[91] Earle, 1865: 8-18; Clarke, 1970: xxxvii-lxxiv; Campbell, 2000: 144; Jorgenson, 2010: 284-285
[92] Davisdon, 1993: 1-2; Lees, 1999: 7-8
[93] E.g. *Beowulf* (Klaeber, 2008); *Widsith* (Malone, 1936)
[94] For more extensive discussion about Orality and the overlap between oral and literary culture in Anglo-Saxon England see: Opland, 1980: 30-43; Green, 1990: 267-280; O'Keeffe, 1990; Orchard, 1997: 101-123; Acker, 1998; Arnovick, 2006
[95] Vercelli, Cathedral Library MS 117; Treharne, 2000; Conner, 2007; Orchard, 2009
[96] Schapiro, 1944: 232-245; Okasha, 1971: 108-112; Ó Carragáin, 2005. The Vercelli version itself has also been attributed to earlier poets: Caedmon (seventh century) and Cynewulf writing in the eight and early-ninth centuries (Cook, 1905: 6-7; Dickins and Ross, 1934: 17-19; Woolf, 1958: 153; Pasternack, 1995: 18-20; Ó Carragáin, 2005: 49-40)
[97] Ó Carragáin, 2005: 248-249
[98] Clemoes, 1983: 4-5; Hunter Blair, 2003: 14-15; Tyler, 2006: 9-37

about the rituals and social reactions surrounding the death of high ranking Germanic warriors, and so have informed understanding of the archaeological evidence discovered in Anglo-Saxon burials like that at Sutton Hoo.[99]

Another source often invoked in accounts of early Anglo-Saxon society is hagiography. Like the poetry, many of these are written at some temporal distance from the actual life of the saint,[100] and they follow a format and structure specific to the genre, which is prioritised over historical accuracy,[101] making them unreliable historical records. Despite this, *vitae* such as those of Cuthbert or Wilfrid,[102] which are almost contemporary with their subjects, are accepted as providing insights into the way of life and societal structures in the Anglo-Saxon world at the end of the seventh century, looking back to a recent past.[103]

Despite such recognition, the traces contained in these 'non-historical' texts must be considered critically for, in addition to the fact that many post-date their subject matter, they were written for specific purposes. Whether the source is an epic poem, like *Beowulf*, or a hagiographical account, such as the *Life of St Cuthbert*, these texts were written as entertainment or instruction (in the case of the former), and to serve exemplary illustrative purpose (in the case of the latter).[104] Many of the events they recount may thus be only

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[99] Cramp, 1957: 57-77; O'Loughlin, 1964: 12; Davidson, 1968: 358; Bruce-Mitford, 1971; 1975: 716-717; Meaney, 1989: 25; Frank, 1992; Williams, 2003: 8-11

[100] Thacker, 1977: 279-328; Meaney, 2001: 29-48; Yorke, 2003: 243-244

[101] For more discussion of the development of Anglo-Saxon saints' lives within the broader context of hagiographic writing, see Jones, 1947; Ridyard, 1988; the essays included in Szarmach, 1996; and the essays included in Lazzari, Lendinara, and Di Sciacca, 2014.

[102] *V. Cuth.* (Colgrave, 1940); Eddius Stephanus, *V. Wilf.* (Colgrave, 1927)

[103] Thacker, 1977: 279-328; Rollason, 1982; Cubitt, 2000: 39-46; Meaney, 2001: 29-48; Magennis, 2004: 163-166

[104] Magennis, 2000: 157; 2004: 166-167. Obviously these descriptions of the texts are reductive, ignoring the nuances of meaning and intended broader purposes, as propaganda for example, of such works, however such discourse will be set aside for the purposes of this study as it is firmly rooted in the later Anglo-Saxon context (ninth through twelfth centuries) in which the literature was recorded.

loosely based in historical events, while many details will have been added, amended, embellished or removed to suit the needs of the narrative and the efficacy of its purpose.[105]

Overall, therefore, the sources available to those providing an outline of the historical changes affecting early Anglo-Saxon society are varied in scope and relatively few in number, each presenting the reader with different critical issues in their account of Anglo-Saxon England and its material culture. Nevertheless, each type of source does provide insight into aspects of Anglo-Saxon society, which can be examined and compared with other records. Thus, when the motives and language underlying these narratives are taken into account, and when certain points are, as Bloch pointed out,[106] identified as overlapping regardless of their date or genre, a general account of Anglo-Saxon England in the sixth and seventh centuries can be presented,[107] which can be utilised in an examination of the visual media from the period.

Having said this, it remains the case that the artwork, being contemporaneous to the period in question, perhaps best illustrates the influences and effectiveness of the two cultures at play. At its core, this study is intended to present an iconographic, art historical examination of the artwork produced in Anglo-Saxon England in the seventh century. To that end, given the scope of the historical events and material artefacts encompassed within that time period, it will focus primarily on traditional iconography, the so-called Germanic motifs, and their persistence and resurgence in response to the incoming Mediterranean influences. It will, therefore, focus predominantly on decorated metalwork, specifically personal ornament, as a medium for the transmission of iconography. Other forms of artwork and artefacts will, however, be incorporated where appropriate to supplement and support the arguments being made.

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[105] Henderson, 1980: 3; Frederick, 2006: 61. See also Parkes, 1997 for a discussion of how the Anglo-Saxons read and understood this literature.
[106] Bloch, 1954: 40-57
[107] For analyses of Anglo-Saxon histories, see e.g.: Stenton, 1943; Blair, 1963; 2003; Campbell and Wormald, 1982a; Higham, 1994; Jones, 1996; Kirby, 2000; Charles-Edwards, 2003

1.2 The Material Evidence

As in the earlier period of migration and settlement in the fifth and sixth centuries, many

of the Anglo-Saxon objects to have survived from the later sixth and seventh centuries are

made of metal: jewellery, armour and weaponry, which have been recovered

archaeologically. Although some are chance finds, for the most part the artefacts were

discovered as grave goods or as hoards.[108] The value placed on these objects by those that

created and buried them should thus not be underestimated: they were personal objects,

deemed sufficiently precious and important to be buried with their owner, or sufficiently

valued (personally) to be 'stored' underground until they could be restored.

Thus grave goods, defined as objects placed with the deceased at the time of

burial,[109] include objects belonging to the deceased as elements of their dress or personal

possessions as well as objects 'donated' to the deceased by others, although it is often

difficult to distinguish between the two upon excavation.[110] In early Anglo-Saxon

England such goods, whether furnishing inhumations or cremations, could vary in quality

and quantity depending on the status of the deceased and the type of burial, and they could

range from personal ornaments to items used in life (weaponry, games, food) to

companion animals.[111]

By contrast, a hoard reflects the deliberate deposit of objects, either as a votive

offering,[112] or with the aim of subsequent recovery. Although relatively uncommon, those

that have been found include both coin hoards and hoards of miscellaneous metal

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[108] Darvill, 2008. See also, Arnold, 1988: 230; Leahy and Bland, 2009
[109] 'Grave Goods': Darvill, 2008; Williams, 2012
[110] King, 2004: 216-219; Darvill, 2008; Williams, 2012
[111] Hutton, 1991: 274-275; Geake, 1997: 134; Stoodley, 1999; Lucy, 2000; Taylor, 2001; Williams, 2006: 86-87
[112] 'Hoard': Darvill, 2008

artefacts,[113] but these are far overshadowed by the recent discovery of the Staffordshire Hoard, which will be extensively referred to here.[114]

A third, more challenging but increasingly important, recovery of relevant and significant metal artefacts is through chance finds and metal detection, which yields little or no archaeological context as was the case with the Staffordshire Hoard.[115] This, combined with the small size and portability of such objects, makes dating them and situating them within the wider material record extremely difficult. That being said, recent efforts to more efficiently catalogue and study such objects, most notably by the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS),[116] have facilitated efforts to incorporate these objects into the scholarship,[117] and with regard to the early Anglo-Saxon metalwork examined here, such chance finds are able to serve as useful comparisons and counterpoints to the more securely situated artefacts.

The varied nature of the archaeological evidence and the imperfect nature of the information generated by it, even by those objects found and recovered within well established archaeological contexts, means that analysis is limited without other sources of information. Much of the material is recovered piecemeal, either in the course of excavation or as stray finds, and only certain materials survive the vagaries of burial underground without significant damage and decay. Nevertheless, the archaeological record does provide an invaluable source of information about the material remains of early Anglo-Saxon England, being almost the only contemporary evidence with which to work.

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[113] Morris, 1983; Blackburn and Pagan, 1986: 291-293; King, 2004: 218; Blackburm, 2012; Webster, 2012
[114] For more information about the Staffordshire Hoard see: Leahy and Bland, 2009; Dean, Hooke and Jones, 2010; Leahy *et al*, 2011
[115] 'Stray Find': Darvill, 2008
[116] The Portable Antiquities Scheme (often referred to as PAS) is a UK government-funded project intended to encourage members of the public to voluntarily record any artefacts they might find. http://finds.org.uk/
[117] For more specific information about the impact of metal detectorists upon the Anglo-Saxon material record as well as the finds recovered see: Kershaw, 2009; Leahy and Bland, 2009; and the essays in Worrell *et al*, 2010

This study will therefore primarily examine metalwork artefacts that were either used in life or, more rarely, produced specifically for burial but which represent the type of objects used in life. It will consider a range of objects that seem to have been intended for use by both high status and lower status members of Anglo-Saxon society, demonstrating that decorative schemes and iconographic motifs were shared by both extremely precious and more utilitarian artefacts. Nonetheless, higher status objects will be privileged, to a certain extent, as the clarity and quality of decoration on such artefacts tend to make the imagery more legible,[118] a factor important in an iconographic study such as this. Furthermore, only certain types of iconographic motif and aesthetic tendencies articulated by the art will be considered, in order to identify what may be indicative of the dialogue between the traditional Germanic culture and that introduced from the Mediterranean world. The discussion will thus not take the form of a comprehensive catalogue of the extant metalwork currently dated to the seventh century,[119] as its concern is art historical and broadly iconographic, and focuses on the visual language: the vocabulary and grammar of the art produced at a time of significant cultural change.

1.3 Cultural Traditions and Identity

Scholarship rehearsing the society and culture of the Germanic peoples generally during the period of their migration and settlement across Europe is vast and well established,[120] as is that postulating those processes in the sub-Roman province of *Britannia*;[121] and their

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[118] For further discussion of iconography as added value see Chapter 3: 184-188

[119] Such studies have, in part, been presented elsewhere. See for example: Hines, 1997; Marzinzik, 2000; Bayliss *et al*, 2013

[120] Bury, 1967; Todd, 1992: 8-10; Wolfram, 1997: 79-110, 304-310; Hines *et al*, 1999: 93; Kobyliński, 2006: 530-537; Halsall, 2006: 51; 2008: 417-454; Noble, 2006: 29; Heather 2009: 36-93; James, 2009: 102-128. For more in depth discussion of Germanic migration, see: Welch, 1992; Trafford, 2000. See also the essays in Chapman and Hamerow, 1997, esp. Anthony, 1997; and Halsall, 2008.

[121] Reece, 1980: 77-92; Loyn, 1991: 15-16; Loseby, 2000: 319-370. For discussion of the Romanisation of Britain see: Salway, 1981; Jones, 1996. For a discussion about the survival of sub-Roman culture into Anglo-Saxon England see: Snyder, 1998: 217-226

impact on the Romano-British population of the region.[122] What is relevant to this

consideration of the art produced in what had become 'Anglo-Saxon England' at the time

of the subsequent process of cultural interaction is our understanding of the nature of those

two cultures: traditional Germanic and Christian Mediterranean.[123]

1.3a Establishing Anglo-Saxon Cultural Identity

Thus whatever the specifics underlying the widespread settlement of Germanic peoples in

the region in the course of the fifth century, the structures of Roman Britain had ceased to

exist in any meaningful way, except perhaps in the far west and the kingdom of Elmet in

modern-day Yorkshire.[124] Generally speaking, it seems that the Romano-British

population had been 'Anglicised' by a combination of force, encouragement, and

acculturation;[125] the Anglo-Saxon societal norm by the end of the sixth century seems to

have been characterised by a warrior-led hierarchy centred around a chieftain or warrior

king of divine ancestry whose military prowess and success benefited all his people

through the acquisition of material goods and greater tracts of territory.[126] The skills

valued in this society were those that enabled survival, defence, and territorial

expansion,[127] while the ethical code linking it was deeply invested in kinship,[128] along with

loyalty and service to a lord or king; this was rewarded either in the form of 'treasure' or

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[122] Stenton, 1973: 30; Myres, 1989: 103-143; Reece, 1989: 234; Higham, 1992: 75, 209-225; Welch, 1992: 9-11; Jones, 1996: 71, 164-168; Fletcher, 1997: 79; James, 2002: 30; Haarke, 2011: 1-28
[123] There was another dimension of cultural contact impacting on Anglo-Saxon England in the seventh century: the 'Celtic' culture of neighbouring Ireland. There was significant cultural, economic, and political exchange between the kingdoms of Anglo-Saxon England and Ireland, manifested in the Insular style of art. For the purposes of this study, however, and due to the constraints of time and available space, the focus is on the cultural contact between traditional Anglo-Saxon and Christianised sub-Roman, Mediterranean, styles.
[124] Higham, 1992: 73-75; Snyder, 1998: 21; Frend, 2003: 79-81
[125] Gelling 1974: 535–56l; Myres, 1989: 110-111; Higham, 1992; Hines, 1994: 49-59; 1996: 256-270; Charles-Edwards, 2003: 124; Härke, 2011: 16-21
[126] Campbell, 1986: 131-138; Kirby, 2000: 3-20; Charles-Edwards, 2003: 133
[127] Campbell, 1986: 131-138; Yorke, 1990: 9-14; Charles-Edwards, 2003: 108-113
[128] Esmonde-Cleary, 1991: 166-167; John, 1996: 8-9; Charles-Edwards, 1997: 171-173; Härke, 1997: 141-142

land,[129] acquired in the course of raiding and warring against neighbouring territories.[130] In turn, it was also necessary for the ruler and his thanes to protect their own land and people from the marauding of neighbouring war parties and it was the success or failure of the king as a military leader that determined whether he retained or lost power.[131] Despite this, the king was not simply the strongest warrior with the largest contingent of loyal soldiers backing his claim: there was also a genealogical component to kingship, with many Anglo-Saxon rulers supporting their claim to rule by reference to extensive genealogies that were traced back to a pagan deity, and which were recounted by the poets (*scops*), whose task it was to retain the 'folk history' of the dynasty.[132] The tales of the *scops* served an almost propagandistic role, reinforcing the military prowess and credibility of a leader by illustrating its inherent presence in his history and his blood.[133]

The political landscape of the Anglo-Saxon world at the end of the sixth century was one of considerable territorial fluidity, political negotiation, and diplomatic exchange. England, more specifically the south, east and central part of the island of Britain, consisted of a number of territories ruled by kings,[134] whose borders fluctuated as the leaders warred against each other and gained or lost territory, but had come to be defined as Kent, Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia, Essex, Sussex and Wessex, with the balance of power and influence shifting between them.[135] Indeed, the introduction of Christianity in the course of the seventh century has been linked to these processes of shifting power.[136]

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[129] Hines, 1989: 193-205; Yorke, 1990: 166-167; Gurevich, 1992: 182-184; Samson, 1991: 87-93; Moreland, 2000: 16-17

[130] Sawyer 1978: 173; Davies 1982: 66; Davidson, 1993: 8; Campbell, 1986: 137; Arnold, 1988: 125

[131] John, 1996: 14; Cusack, 1998: 92-93, Yorke 1990: 15-17; Naismith, 2012: 31-32

[132] Sisam, 1953: 287-298; Shippey, 1982: 65-74; 2004; Cusack, 1998: 91-92; North, 1997: 13

[133] Malone, 1990: 77-78; Frank, 1993: 11-13; Evans, 1997: 9-21; Horton, 2010: 47-52

[134] Yorke, 1990: 9-10; 1997: 158; Charles-Edwards, 2003: 38-39

[135] Stenton, 1971: 33-36; Laing and Laing, 1979: 91; Campbell, 1986: 90-91; John, 1996: 16, 18-21; Kirby, 2000: 4; Frassetto, 2003: 34; Yorke, 2009: 81-96

[136] Bede, *HE* II.15 (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 188-191); Higham, 1997: 190-191; Cusack, 1998: 101

The Ionan mission, for instance, active in the north and west of the island,[137] can be

considered to have moved into Anglo-Saxon Northumbria in the early-seventh century as

part of Oswald's reaction to the earlier rule of Edwin (under whom he was in exile in the

British kingdom of Dál Riada) and his affiliations with Kent, articulated by marriage and

the activities of the papal mission in the North in the 620s.[138] Likewise, this mission, led

by Augustine, is understood to have received the support of the Kentish king, Æðelbert, as

part of his building alliances with Gaul, confirmed by his marriage to the Merovingian

princess Bertha.[139]

Due to the lack of contemporary literary sources, what is known of Anglo-Saxon

pagan belief at the time of these missions is generally gathered from the scant historical

and place-name evidence. The presumed names of the gods of the Anglo-Saxon pantheon,

such as Woden and Thunor, are preserved in the names of towns and striking aspects of

the landscape, such as Wednesbury in Staffordshire, Woodnesborough in Kent, and

Thundersley in Essex, or the name Wansdyke (Woden's dyke) given to a Neolithic barrow

in Cambridgeshire.[140] The names of the deities were also preserved in later Anglo-Saxon

royal genealogies, which indicate that most ruling dynasties wished to claim descent from

Woden.[141] They are also retained in the Old English names of the days of the week: such

as *Tiwesdæg* (Tiw's day), Wodnesdaeg (Woden's day), *Thunresdæg* (Thunor's day), or

Frīgedæg (Fríge's day) – Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday respectively.[142] And

they were preserved in traditional practices and customs, like those recorded in the *Nine*

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[137] Stenton, 1971: 112-115; Campbell, 1986: 23-35; Kirby, 1992: 914-915; Higham, 1995: 19-20; Charles-Edwards, 2003: 104
[138] Bede, *HE* III.3: (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 218-221); see also, Charles-Edwards, 2003: 132-133
[139] Stenton, 1971: 56-60, 105-106; Yorke, 1990: 28-30; Mayr-Harting, 1991: 50; John, 1996: 17-25, esp. 18; Fletcher, 1997: 116-117; Higham, 1997: 73-77; Kirby, 2000: 34-45; Hunter Blair, 2003: 116-117; Frassetto, 2003: 50-51; Wood, 2003: 48-49
[140] Branston, 1957: 29-30; Meaney, 1966: 105-108; Wilson 1992: 5-43; Fellows-Jensen, 1995: 180-186; Hooke, 2010: 48-51; Higham and Ryan, 2013: 151
[141] Sissam, 1953: 287-298; North, 1997: 13
[142] Chaney, 1970: 38-39; Wilson, 1992, 11; John, 1996: 23; Brooks, 1998: 24

Herbs Charm.[143] In order to understand and interpret these trace remains of Anglo-Saxon paganism it has been considered necessary to look to the better documented types of Germanic paganism that are recorded as having been practised outside of Anglo-Saxon England, most often that of Scandinavia. Like so much of the literary material included in discussions of the Anglo-Saxons,[144] recorded in the thirteenth century,[145] this clearly is far removed in time and place from (seventh-century) Anglo-Saxon England, but it is generally accepted that there must have been some parity between Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian paganism, as there is a shared nomenclature for deities, with both emerging from the Germanic religious systems observed by the migrating Germanic tribes that eventually settled in both England and Scandinavia.[146] Although little is known with any certainty about Anglo-Saxon beliefs on dying and what comes after, the burials have long been recognised as one of the richest sources of material information about the subject.

Furthermore, it seems that Anglo-Saxons had a deeply ingrained belief in fate, or *wyrd*, as a powerful force driving the events in their lives,[147] something reflected in Old English verse,[148] where the term is used to denote frames of reference usually translated as fate, fortune, or providence, indicating that it signified a certain fatalistic attitude towards life and death in Anglo-Saxon society.[149] In the Anglo-Saxon worldview, it seems men were 'doomed' to die and events were fated to happen; *wyrd* could, however, be influenced and fate perhaps altered by a man's courage.[150] Interestingly, the role of Anglo-Saxon *wyrd* was seemingly so pervasive that it was incorporated into Christian culture and

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[143] Gordon, 1962: 92-93; Meaney, 1966: 110-11; Wilson, 1992: 5-43; Yorke, 2005: 250; Macleaod and Mees, 2006: 127; see below, Chapter 2: 101
[144] See above: 25-31
[145] Turville-Petre, 1964: 1-34; Shippey, 2002
[146] Davidson, 1993: 84-108; Williams, 2010: 67-82; Carver, 2010: 5-7;
[147] Branston, 1957: 57; Hutton, 1991: 272; Phillpotts, 1991: 1-6; Amodio, 2013: 372-373
[148] A more general meaning for the term *wyrd* would be a simple 'that which happens' or 'event'; sometimes it may mean simply 'circumstance'. In a more Christianised setting, further meaning seems to have shifted away from the event to that which caused the event, and *wyrd* could thus be translated as 'fate', 'fortune', 'providence' or even 'one's lot' (Timmer, 1941: 227; Griffith, 1996: 137; Amadio, 2010: 372)
[149] Griffith, 1996: 137; Trahern, 1991: 160
[150] Pollington, 1996: 166-167

reinterpreted as God's intention and mercy.[151] This shifting of *wyrd* into such a

Christianised context can be seen in the 98-line gnomic poem *The Fortunes of Men*

recorded in a late tenth-century compendium of Old English verse known as the *Exeter*

Book,[152] which describes a number of possibly fatal misfortunes that might befall a person

in their lifetime but concludes that fate, *wyrd*, and fortune, good or bad, lies in God's

hands.[153]

      A general continuum of non-Christian belief systems, rituals and practices which

were appropriated to serve Christian purposes was likely widespread. Based on the

evidence of Pope Gregory's letter to Abbot Mellitus, as recorded by Bede, it would seem

that even at the time of conversion there was an understanding that the retention of some

familiar pagan trappings would be necessary to aid in the process of conversion.[154] This

situation of performing long-standing (pagan) rituals, especially those related to the

treatment of the dead, in a Christianised Anglo-Saxon England, may seem somewhat

incongruous, involving as it did the co-existence of two apparently incompatible belief

systems in one culture, especially one where conversion was mandated from the highest

levels of society. It was certainly an arduous and often incomplete process. Following his

account of Rædwald's sacrilegious worship of both Christian and pagan gods, for instance,

Bede mentions that Aldwulf of East Anglia saw the working pagan temple persisting

approximately forty years after the death of Rædwald:[155]

> …in the same temple he had an altar for the Christian Sacrifice, and another small
> one at which to offer victims to devils. Aldwulf, king of that same province, who
> lived in our time, testifies that this temple had stood until his time, and that he had
> seen it when he was a boy.[156]

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[151] Trahern, 1991: 160; Pollington, 1996: 216-218
[152] Exeter Cathedral Library MS 3501; Shippey, 1976: 58-63; Muir, 1994: 1-41
[153] Dammers, 1976: 461-469; Swenson, 1991: 123-135; Drout, 1998: 186-187; Magennis, 2006: 45-46
[154] Bede, *HE* I.27, I.30 (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 78-103, 106-109)
[155] Branson, 1957: 54; Jennings, 2007: 72-73
[156] Bede, *HE* II.15: atque in eodem fano et altare haberet ad sacrificium Christi, et arulam ad uictimas
daemoniorum. Quod uidelicet fanum rex eiusdem prouinciae Alduulf, qui nostra aetate fuit, usque ad suum
tempus perdurasse, et se in pueritia uidisse testabatur. (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 188-191)

Likewise, evidence drawn from the Anglo-Saxon law codes, dating from the seventh century and continuing as late as the tenth century, indicates that, despite the more 'complete' nature of the Christianization process in England by the eighth century, practices identified as pagan were still being actively outlawed.[157] The laws of Wihtred, king of Kent in the late-seventh and early-eighth century (written in 695 CE),[158] for example, contain specific proscriptions against the sacrifice of animals or giving gifts to idols.[159] The laws of Alfred of Wessex, compiled in the late-ninth century from a number of earlier codes, notably those of Æðelbert of Kent (from the sixth century), Ina of Wessex (from the end of the seventh century), and Offa of Mercia, dating from the late-eighth century,[160] retain mention of specific pagan practices still deemed relevant: outlawing, for example, the sacrifice of idols and practice of magic as well as the harbouring of anyone who practises magic.[161] Earlier, in the mid-eighth century, the Church had felt it necessary to speak out against pagan practices at the Council of Clofesho in 747, condemning those who practise magic, incantations, divination, or augury.[162] Laws dating from the tenth and early-eleventh centuries also outlaw such specific practices;[163] however, as Scandinavian pagans had come to settle in England from the end of the ninth century, it is impossible to know if these were the result of a persistence of Anglo-Saxon paganism or a 'resurgence' of Scandinavian practices.[164] Nonetheless, the need to officially and legally outlaw certain practices indicates that they were being performed and in a manner sufficiently open and regular to require repeatedly clear and unequivocal prohibition. That these proscriptions

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[157] Wilson, 1992: 36-38; Thompson, 2012: 197-198; Higham and Ryan, 2013: 162-163
[158] Wormald, 2001: 101-102
[159] Oliver, 2002: 170-173; Higham and Ryan, 2013: 162
[160] Attenborough, 1922: 34-35, 63; Loyn, 1984: 65; Giandrea, 2007: 55-56
[161] Attenborough, 1922: 76-79; Griffiths, 1995: 54; Jennings, 2007: 54-55
[162] Cubitt, 1995: 99-125; Blair, 2003: 122; Jennings, 2007: 54
[163] Attenborough, 1922: 103; Griffiths, 1995: 84; Blair, 2003: 222; Jennings, 2007: 55-56
[164] Whitelock, 1941: 1-21; Wormald, 1982: 134; Page, 1998: 114

against specific pagan behaviour were appearing up to three centuries after the supposed conversion of the Anglo-Saxons suggests quite strongly that some aspects of paganism were long held and practised in conjunction with, or perhaps despite, Christian belief systems.

Further evidence concerning the importance placed on such practices, particularly in relation to beliefs about the afterlife, are preserved archaeologically in the varied burial practices, and in the indications of rituals that must have been invested in them, which range from the construction of cremation pyres, the gathering of grave goods, and for a short period in the seventh century, the construction of elaborate mounds, sometimes burial, incorporating chambers and boats.[165] The later Old English elegies, invoking the traditions associated with such rituals, albeit in a Christian context, articulate the emotional impact invested in them.[166] Regarding burials themselves, particularly those involving the most obvious displays of wealth and elaborate ritual,[167] certainly indicate that Anglo-Saxons, like many of their Germanic counterparts, believed that there was an afterlife in which they would be able to use the goods interred with them.[168] This is suggested, not only by durable or household goods, but also by food, which is understood to have been intended as an offering or to supply the deceased on their 'journey' into the next world/life.[169] Companion animals, ranging from horses to elderly dogs, were also seemingly included, suggesting that they were being sacrificed to accompany the deceased

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[165] Meaney, 1964: 16-17; Chadwick Hawkes, 1991: 24; Carver, 1992: 181; Geake, 1997; 2002; Lucy, 2000: 97; Theuws, 2000: 134; Crabtree, 2001: 47-48; Williams, 2004: 263-291; 2006: 31, 86-92; Lee, 2007: 59-60; Hoggett, 2010: 9-21; Nugent and Williams, 2012: 187-208. Both types of funerary practice are described in *Beowulf*: cremation on a pyre (ll. 1110-1113), and furnished burial under a mound (ll. 3156-3182) Klaeber, 2008: 36, 107-109; Wilson, 1992: 87

[166] Klinck, 1943: 30-40, esp. 35-39, 221-252; Evans, 1994: 9; Dyas, 2001: 105-123; Alexander, 2002: 139-140; Magennis, 2007: 303-318; Amodio, 2013: 229, 235-237

[167] Carver, 1994: 112; Geake, 1997: 137; Lee, 2007: 17-18

[168] Richards, 1984: 42-55; Chadwick Hawkes, 1991: 24; Wilson 1992: 97-98; Davidson, 1993: 134-135; Lucy, 1997: 150-168; Hoggett, 2010: 105

[169] Hutton, 1991: 274; Geake, 1992: 137-144; Wilson, 1992: 97-100; Lee, 2007: 3-4

into the afterlife as they had accompanied them in life.[170] However, such furnished burials are now more commonly interpreted as displays of the socio-political identity of the deceased, as expressions of age, ethnicity, gender, kinship, and status.[171] The quantity of furnished graves for all levels of society, the varied and often significant types of items buried, and the persistence of the practice over centuries into the period when Christianity had become widely established, suggest that, for the Anglo-Saxons, death and what came after was, not surprisingly, of considerable importance, and involved certain recognised rituals,[172] speaking of complex understandings of the afterlife.

Of these rituals, cremation demanded a series of practical steps be performed before the final deposition of the body, in a cinerary urn. The body was prepared and a funerary pyre constructed, apparently covered with furs and textiles and possibly artefacts, before the body was placed on it, possibly along with offerings of food, drink, and companion animals.[173] All of these would have been destroyed by the fire, transforming the body before the eyes of any mourners present, and visible to the wider community who saw the flames or smoke from a distance. *Beowulf* offers an evocative portrayal of such practices at the end of the poem.

> The Geat people built a pyre for Beowulf,
> Stacked and decked it until it stood four-square,
> Hung with helmets, heavy war-shields
> And shining armour, just as he had ordered.
> Then his warriors laid him in the middle of it,
> Mourning a lord far-famed and beloved.
> On a height they kindled the hugest of all
> Funeral fires; fumes of wood smoke
> Billowed darkly up, the blaze roared
> And drowned out their weeping, wind died down
> And flames wrought havoc in the hot bone-house,
> Burning it to the core. They were disconsolate

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[170] Hutton 1991: 274; Wilson, 1992: 101-135
[171] Harke, 1992; Stoodley, 1999; Williams, 2010: 67
[172] Price, 2008; Williams 2010: 69-70
[173] Bond, 1996; 2015; Williams 2005: 260-264; 2010: 72-73; Hoggett, 2010: 85-90

And wailed aloud for their lord's decease.[174]

Once cooled, the ashes were placed in a decorated urn and buried, with some time perhaps separating the two events.[175] It has been suggested that some of the artefacts and bone left from the pyre could have been retrieved and circulated amongst the mourners,[176] perhaps reinforcing the sense of community involvement in the loss of the deceased.

Inhumation, practiced alongside cremation, could be less complex but it nevertheless involved actions that were no less ritualised or public.[177] The body was prepared and laid out with specific garments and objects. The grave was dug, sometimes directly into the earth and sometimes lined with wood or stone to form a burial chamber. The body was positioned within the grave and the assemblage of grave goods arranged deliberately around the space. Even graves dug directly into earth show evidence of being much larger than necessary for just the body, suggesting that it was intended to hold subsidiary objects and so perhaps indicating that it was intended as a site of display for mourners and the community.[178] While many burial spaces were simple and utilitarian, more elaborate burial chambers were created for higher status burials, likely lengthening the preparation time needed and the number of people involved in the process. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it has been argued that the furnishings of a grave, although undoubtedly relevant to the deceased, reveal as much, if not more, about what the living wished to express.[179] The objects themselves need not necessarily have been visible to be bearers of symbolic value, any more than the body itself needed to be clearly visible; there is

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[174] *Beowulf*, ll. 3137-49: Him ða gegiredan Geata leode | ad on eorðan unwaclicne, | helmum behongen, hildebordum, | beorhtum byrnum, swa he bena wæs; | alegdon ða tomiddes mærne þeoden | hæleð hiofende, hlaford leofne. | Ongunnon þa on beorge bælfyra mæst | wigend weccan; wudurec astah | sweart ofer swioðole, swogende leg | wope bewunden – windblond gelæg – | oðþæt he ða banhus gebrocen hæfde | hat on hreðre. Higum unrote | modceare mændon, mondryhtnes cwealm. (Klaeber, 2008: 106-107; Heaney, 1999: 211)
[175] Williams, 2005; 2010: 73; Hoggett, 2010: 89-90
[176] McKinley, 1994; Williams, 2005; 2010: 71-72
[177] Hoggett, 2010: 95-96
[178] Filmer-Sanky and Pestell, 2001: 36-38, 238; Hoggett, 2010: 95; Williams, 2010: 77-78
[179] Crawford, 2004: 89-90; Lucy, 2000: 142-143; Williams, 2006: 86–87

evidence that both the body and some of the grave goods would have been veiled or wrapped in textiles before being placed in the earth.[180] However, the lengthy preparation process and the visibility of each stage would have ensured that those participating in and viewing the funeral would have some knowledge of what was being interred. As with cremation, the rituals of inhumation involved a visible process, preparation and deposition, for an audience of mourners and the wider community.

The public nature of such burials was made more explicit by the use of tumuli.[181] These were deliberately constructed and could be placed, as with both the Sutton Hoo, and Taplow mounds (Figs 1.2a-b), on high ground overlooking water, so that they were visible from a distance, particularly if approached by water, along the River Deben in the case of Sutton Hoo, or the Jubilee River feeding into the Thames, just beyond Taplow.[182] It has been argued that the use of these mounds was intended to make a permanent mark on the landscape and to ensure that they would have been recognised and remembered;[183] this certainly seems to have inspired the orders given by Beowulf for his own funeral, demanding that his burial mound be built high and overlooking the sea in order to ensure its endurance and his reputation into future generations:

> Order my troop to construct a barrow
> On a headland on the coast, after my pyre has cooled.
> It will loom in the horizon at Hronesness
> And be a reminder among my people--
> So that in coming times crews under sail
> Will call it Beowulf's barrow, as they steer
> Ships across the wide and shrouded waters.[184]

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[180] Crowfoot, 2001: 211-212; Williams 2010: 78
[181] Owen-Crocker, 2000: 62; Carver, 2002: 132-143; Pollington 2008: 53-54
[182] Meaney, 1964: 18-19; Filmer-Sankey, 1992: 47-48; Carver, 1998: 163; 2002: 134; Pollington, 2008: 29-30
[183] Pollington 2008: 35
[184] *Beowulf*, ll. 2802-2808: Hataŏ heaŏomære hlæw gewyrcean | beorhtne æfter bæle æt brimes nosan; | se scel to gemyndum minum leodum | heah hlifian on Hronesnæsse, | þæt hit sæliŏend syŏŏan hatan | Biowulfes biorh, ŏa ŏe brentingas | ofer floda genipu feorran drifaŏ. (Klaeber, 2008: 95; Heaney, 1999: 88)

The visibility, ritual, and public performance surrounding death remained, arguably, of significant interest in Anglo-Saxon culture, as illustrated by an episode form the *Voyages of Ohthere and Wulfstan* to the Baltic, inserted into the late- ninth-century translation and adaptation of Orosius' *Historiae Adversus Paganos*, also known as the *Seven Books Against the Pagans*.[185] Wulfstan's report of his voyage to the "barbarian" lands of Estonia contained his eyewitness account of highly ritualised burial practices surrounding the public distribution of the goods of the deceased.[186]

In Anglo-Saxon England of the later sixth and seventh centuries, such goods included not only items familiar to the deceased, they also included items of exotica, in part signifiers of status and identity, and among such objects were coins, which by this time had long since lost their function as currency in a bullion and barter based economy.[187] Instead, they had become sources of precious metal to be reused to make jewellery or, in fact, became jewellery themselves.[188] There is archaeological evidence, for instance, of Roman coins being pierced and suspended and used decoratively on clothing or as pendants from the fifth to the seventh centuries in England (Fig. 1.3).[189] As coins were not minted in Britain during the early Anglo-Saxon period, they would have been seen as objects of exotica, imports and evidence of influence within a wider sphere.[190] For example, the 37 coins found in the Sutton Hoo purse each come from a different Merovingian mint.[191] Although the purpose of such a collection is widely debated, and even sometimes dismissed as chance,[192] the deliberate use of coins from multiple mints

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[185] Orosius (Bately, 1980)
[186] Orosius, ll. 27-33 (Bately, 1980: 17); Greenfield, 1986: 56-57; Anlezark, 1991: 79
[187] Kent, 1961: 64; Fulford, 1979; Esmond Cleary, 1989: 138-139; 1993: 57-59; Campbell and Wormald, 1991: 13-16; Higham, 1992: 70; Janes, 1998: 38-40; Cool, 2000; 2006: 223-235; 2010: 8-9; Galestin, 2001; Adby, 2002: 56-66; Gannon, 2003: 7-8; Härke, 2007: 57-60; Halsall, 2012: 97, 175; Gerrard, 2013: 8
[188] Arnold, 1988; 110-111; Gannon, 2003: 8
[189] PAS, BERK-232092. King, 1988: 224; Reece, 2002: 64-65; Gannon, 2003: 8; Moorhead, 2006: 99-102
[190] Bruce-Mitford 1978: 487–522; Evans 1986: 87–88; Webster and Brown, 1997: 223 cat. no. 53f.; Webster, 2012: 120-122
[191] Bruce-Mitford, 1975: 578-677
[192] Stahl, 1992; Williams, 2013: 127-128

suggests that contact and influence with a wider geographical and political sphere were being constructed.[193] The use of coins as gifts and their reuse as jewellery suggests that, although they were no longer seen as currency in early Anglo-Saxon England, they had obtained status as objects in their own right.

It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that coins became a component in elaborately worked, high status jewellery of the early Anglo-Saxon elite. A seventh-century coin pendant (Fig. 1.4),[194] found by chance in Forsbrook, Staffordshire, illustrates this process.[195] The coin is a gold s*olidus* from the reign of Valentinian II, dating from 375-392 CE. It is set within a ring of gold, garnet and glass cloisonné. This alternates semi-circular cells of blue glass with more irregularly shaped cells of red garnet to form a double-headed serpent, confronting itself at the top, under the suspension loop, itself set with rectangular garnet cloisonné. The coin is set with its obverse displayed, so the imperial bust and inscription are clearly visible. A similar pendant (Fig. 1.5),[196] dated to the late-sixth or seventh centuries, was also found on a beach at Bacton in Norfolk.[197] Like the Forsbrook pendant, it is made from a coin set in a ring of gold and garnet cloisonné, which takes the form of two confronting and interlacing serpents, or arguably a double headed serpent, with extended proboscises; again, the coin is displayed with the bust of the Emperor facing outward, clearly visible. In this case, however, the coin is an imitation of a coin struck by Maurice Tiberius (582-602). The use of a forgery, as coinage to be displayed in jewellery, is indicative of how desirable and exotic such objects were considered to be in England at this time.

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[193] Bruce-Mitford, 1975: 585; Lambert, 2010: 186-187
[194] British Museum, 1879,0714.1
[195] Blurton, 1997: 194
[196] British Museum, 1846,0620.1
[197] Speake, 1980: pl 3c

The Wilton Cross (Fig. 1.6),[198] a seventh-century cross-shaped pendant, dated to the mid-630s,[199] also incorporates a coin into its design but reverses the orientation.[200] In this case the coin used is a lightweight gold *solidus* minted in the names of Heraclius and Heraclius Constantine, Byzantine co-Emperors (613-641).[201] It has been traced to a large payment made by Heraclius to the Avars as a form of protection, and is dated with some precision to 623 CE.[202] Like the other pendants, the coin of the Wilton cross is set into an elaborate gold and garnet cloisonné setting, here forming an equal-armed cross with expanded terminals springing from a large cloisonné ring surrounding the coin. There is a gold collar of plain and beaded filigree set between the coin and the jewelled mount with the gold tone similar to that of the *solidus* but differing from the considerably paler gold of the jewelled setting and suspension loop, suggesting that the coin went through at least two stages of construction to become the Wilton Cross.[203] Indeed there is some evidence that the original setting displayed the coin with the obverse facing outward (Fig. 1.7), showing the busts of the two Emperors like the other coin pendants.[204] The coin, and accompanying collar, were then reset into the gold and garnet cross-shaped pendant, but flipped so that the reverse of the coin, bearing the image of a stepped cross, faces outward.[205] The obverse is left visible, and the upward orientation of the Emperors is maintained, although the lack of a full back plate reduces the jewel's structural integrity and was not common practice (Fig. 1.8).[206] Regardless of this, the attention paid to the display and orientation of the coin, irrespective of which side was being presented, further emphasises the value and significance assigned to coins and their display as exotica.

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[198] British Museum, 1859,0512.1
[199] Archibald, 2013: 62-64
[200] Webster and Backhouse, 1991: 12; Marzinzik, 2013: 118-119
[201] Webster and Backhouse, 1991: 12; Archibald, 2013: 52
[202] Archibald, 2013: 54-58
[203] Archibald, 2013: 58-59
[204] Archibald, 2013: 59
[205] Archibald, 2013: 60
[206] Bruce-Mitford, 1974: 31; Care Evans, 1991: 28; Webster and Backhouse, 1991: 12; Archibald, 2013: 60

In addition to coins being set in jewellery, there are also pieces that, arguably, take their form and ornamentation from Roman coinage. Bracteates are perhaps the most familiar form of this practice, being round pendants, usually made out of gold foil, but occasionally made from silver or copper-alloy foil, displaying a stamped central image. Although not as plentiful in England as they are on the Continent, where they form one of the largest groups of migration-era artefact types,[207] Anglo-Saxon examples of fifth- and sixth-century date do survive.[208] Important here is the fact that bracteates were not simply copies of existing coins reproduced in pendant form, but rather appropriated iconographic aspects of individual coin types.[209] They can, essentially, be seen as a type of coin analogue with specific political or apotropaic purposes.[210] The fifth-century gold bracteate pendant found in Undley, Suffolk (Fig. 1.9),[211] and which, although thought to be of possibly Scandinavian origin,[212] is usually included within the broader Anglo-Saxon corpus,[213] displays complex and somewhat contentious imagery. A helmeted head, in profile appears with an image of the she-wolf with Romulus and Remus, surrounded by an inscription,[214] however the relationship between the two image motifs, whether it is a combined image of the obverse and reverse of a coin prototype or, in the manner of horse-and-rider inspired bracteates, the head is 'riding' the she-wolf remains a point of scholarly debate.[215] Although somewhat abstracted in this bracteate, the similarities between it and the *Urbs Roma* type of coins, namely those featuring a bust in profile surrounded by an

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[207] Behr, 2010: 34
[208] Gaimster, 1992: 12-13; Behr, 2010: 34
[209] Crocker, 2004: 88; Gaimster, 2011: 871. For more detailed discussion of bracteates see: Bakka, 1981; Chadwick Hawkes and Pollard, 1981; Axboe, 1982; Axboe and Kromannm, 1992; Gaimster, 1996; Behr, 2010
[210] Gaimster, 1992: 12-13; Gannon, 2003: 10; Behr, Pestell and Hines, 2014: 45
[211] British Museum, 1984,1101.1
[212] For discussion of the Scandinavian origin of the Undley bracteate see: Axboe, 1982; West, 1983; Hines, 1984; Hines and Odemstedt, 1987; Hines, 1991. For arguments in favour of the bracteate's 'English' origin see: Hills, 1991; Page, 1991
[213] Behr, 2010: 38, 67-69
[214] Marzinzik, 2013: 92-93
[215] West, 1983: 459; 1985: 37; Hines, 1984: 204-9; Hills, 1991: 145-151; Gannon, 2003: 74, 145-146; 2007b: 288

inscription, are clear to see. An early sixth-century silver bracteate (Fig. 1.10),[216] found in Bridlington, Yorkshire, also displays what appears to be a male bust in profile, but in this case the motif can be interpreted as an abstract variation on a horseman figure with a very stylised horse filling the bottom half of the disc. Horse-and-rider figures are an iconographic motif found on Roman and Mediterranean coins, such as is featured on the reverse of a silver denarius of Carausius (286-93) found in Hertfordshire (Fig, 1.11),[217] and on the reverse of a copper-alloy nummus of Constantine I (306-37) (Fig. 1.12).[218] Alternatively, the iconographical motif can also be linked to late Roman medallions, gold coins issued to commemorate a special event or occasion, which often bore an emperor's bust on the obverse and other Imperial motifs on the reverse.[219] Indeed, it might seem more plausible that the larger golden medallions were a closer iconographical prototype of the bracteates than the more commonplace coinage given the presence of two-sided imitation medallions predating the single-sided bracteates in the Scandinavian archaeological record.[220] Therefore, the decoration of this bracteate might represent a conflation of two coin- or medallion-inspired motifs, a stylised horse and rider or the Imperial portrait above, placed or floating over a horse-like beast.

Whether this is indeed the case, coins, due to their portability and the mechanisms for their circulation within and beyond the Roman Empire, are a remarkably effective means of iconographic transmission. As an extensive study by Anna Gannon has demonstrated, the systematic and structured creation and distribution of coins within a Roman (or later Byzantine) context ensured that they can be seen as mediators of Mediterranean iconography in the Germanic world. [221] Indeed it would seem that iconographic types

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[216] British Museum, 2014,8015.1
[217] PAS, BH-404120
[218] British Museum, B.95. For further discussion of the horse-and-rider motif see Chapter 2: 127-130
[219] Hauck, 1976; Hines, 1993: 219-220; Magnus, 1997; Gannon, 2003: 9; Wicker, 2003: 533-534
[220] Wicker, 2003: 533; Behr, 2010: 54
[221] Gannon, 2003

found on Anglo-Saxon coins remain resilient despite significant degrees of abstraction, being distinct but recognisable through numerous incarnations. Although early Anglo-Saxon England did not participate in minting, coins were recognisable, familiar, and even prized objects either through reuse or as exotic imports. When the Augustinian mission arrived in Kent at the end of the sixth century they brought with them images and objects decorated with overt Christian frames of reference,[222] but this type of iconography, although alien and distinct from the traditional modes of Anglo-Saxon art, would not have been entirely unfamiliar.

1.4 Anglo-Saxon Conversion: A Cultural Response

By the seventh century, therefore, the societal norms, belief systems, rituals and attitudes toward (imported) exotica were well established in Anglo-Saxon culture having been developed and reinforced over the two centuries and multiple generations since the migration and settlement period of the fifth century. The arrival of the papal mission from Rome thus marked the introduction of a distinctly different, classicised set of cultural practices and sensibilities which encountered, and were encountered by, those traditional to the Anglo-Saxons.

This cultural contact does not occupy the primary textual sources, but it can be seen with some clarity in the visual, material record: in the shifts of imagery and ornamentation that appear on objects dating from the seventh century and the equally telling persistence of iconographic and aesthetic traditions in the Christian material.[223] This visual evidence, a more contemporary and therefore arguably more relevant source of

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[222] Bede, *HE* I. 25: Fertur autem, quia adpropinquantes ciuitati more suo cum cruce sancta et imagine magni regis Domini nostri Iesu Christi. (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 74-75); Bede, *H. Abb*. 6 (Plummer, 1896: 368-370); Kendrick, 1938: 13-14; Maevert, 1979: 63-77; Charles-Edwards, 2003: 111; Hawkes, 2003a: 87; O'Reilly, 2003: 144; Webster, 2003: 17
[223] It is this dialogue as it is visible in the material record of the seventh century that will be discussed in the ensuing chapters.

information than the later textual material, indicates that the people of seventh-century Anglo-Saxon England experimented with the newly introduced Mediterranean culture, and its associated imagery and aesthetic, exploring the ways in which Christianity and its trappings could be melded with the traditional visual culture of the Anglo-Saxons. This dialogue between different and sometimes contrasting cultural practices and belief systems in the choices made on the ornamentation of the artwork – selecting Mediterranean or traditional Germanic imagery, perhaps melding the two types of iconographic motifs, or avoiding recognizable imagery by using geometric pattern – offers insight into the transitional process at work in each decorative decision that was made.

That being said, there was some apparent resistance to the introduction and growing influence of Christianity and its underlying Mediterranean cultural practices throughout the seventh century in England, which saw traditional practices being actively embraced or even resurrected. The use of burial mounds, for instance, did not represent a continuation of unbroken traditional burial practices,[224] but was rather a deliberate re-appropriation of a prehistoric practice, either by the reuse of existing barrows,[225] or by the creation of contemporary mounds to recall the Neolithic barrows.[226] One interpretation of this Anglo-Saxon borrowing of the distant past is that it reflects an attempt to draw a clear link between that past and the Anglo-Saxon present in an effort to legitimise and strengthen the contemporary traditional identities,[227] at the moment of the initial re-Christianisation of Anglo-Saxon society.[228] In their visibility and their physical stamp on the landscape it has been argued that the burial mounds were erected in reaction to the ambitious building campaign of the Roman Christian mission, which was raising stone

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[224] Pollington, 2008
[225] Hutton, 1991: 277; Hoggett, 2010: 117; Williams, 1997; 1998; 1999; 2003; Semple, 1998; 2003; Bell, 2005
[226] Pollington, 2008: 27-28
[227] Lucy, 1992; Williams, 1998; 1999; Hoggett, 2010: 206-207; Pollington, 2008: 37
[228] Carver, 1986; 1998a; 1998b; 2001: 5-9

churches and monastic complexes across the landscape in the early decades of the seventh century.[229]

Regardless of such arguments, it seems that burial mounds were considered sites of mystery and potency within the Anglo-Saxon landscape in Old English literature: *Beowulf* and *Maxims II*, for instance, link them with hidden treasure and lurking dragon guardians.[230] It has also been suggested that they may have been used as meeting places or sacred spaces,[231] and by virtue of their physical presence could act as boundary markers between territories.[232] Such explanations accept that these ancient mounds held a particular resonance in Anglo-Saxon society long after their initial functions were forgotten; perhaps in re-appropriating the monument form the Anglo-Saxons expected their own would prove equally enduring. Certainly they dominated the landscape, making a permanent mark on it, ensuring visibility, and so recognition and remembrance.[233] Unlike the marked graves in a cemetery, the burial mounds endured long after the memory of the deceased buried within had vanished, and it is perhaps this idea of longevity and a return to half-remembered history, a perceived tradition, which inspired the recreation of these monuments.

Overall, however, it would seem that at the time of conversion it was understood that the retention of some familiar traditional trappings could be invoked in the process of conversion;[234] it might be argued that incorporating a traditional vernacular aesthetic formed part of the effort to make the new familiar and so ease the transition into Christian practice. It has also been suggested, by Cramp and Henderson among others, that this continued use of earlier motifs was the result of the newly Christian artists 'reverting' to a

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[229] Taylor and Taylor, 1960; Chaney 1982; Fernie, 1983: 12-63; Gem, 1997; Lucy, 1999: 23; Hawkes, 2003a: 69-99; Semple, 2013: 189-191
[230] Semple, 1998; 2010: 110-111; Symons, 2014
[231] Chaney, 1972: 80-81, 104-105
[232] Shepherd, 1979: 47-79, esp. 48, 50, 70-77; Hooke, 1981: 24; Arnold, 1988: 218; Hollis, 1998: 51-52
[233] Pollington, 2008: 35
[234] Bede, *HE* I.27, I.30 (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 78-103, 106-109)

type of imagery that was more familiar than the imported Mediterranean exemplars.[235] While neither sufficiently explains the persistence of the traditional forms and aesthetic and their appropriation into, and subsequent proliferation within, the new media of manuscripts and carved stone, such practices clearly represent an intentional and deliberate choice to cast new, foreign, alien ideas and inclinations in a traditional, familiar, and, most importantly, potent way.

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[235] Kendrick, 1938: 171; Cramp, 1974: 115-140; 1978: 1-32; Henderson, 1980: 7-8

Chapter Two – Iconography as Cultural Identity

2.1 Cultural Contact: Tradition in the face of Change

As the focus of this study is the effect of the sustained cultural contact between traditional Germanic Anglo-Saxon and Mediterranean-influenced Christian cultures it was necessary to detect and distinguish between the different influences upon the pre-existing cultural landscape. Having set out the cultural contacts affecting Anglo-Saxon England during the seventh century, a crucial next step is to identify a way to monitor the effect of those contacts upon the existing culture. Art, and more specifically image motifs, stand as a tangible record of the cultural, social and political influences of any historical period and can thus illuminate the effect of widespread changes on society. This is especially true for oral societies like that in seventh-century Anglo-Saxon England.

For the Anglo-Saxons (and the purposes of this study) the traditional mode of artistic decoration was Germanic in origin, although it evolved and was adapted within an Anglo-Saxon context. This is particularly so with the art that included representations of animals. Tellingly, and in stark contrast to the artistic practices of the newly introduced Mediterranean-influenced Christian visual culture, the iconography of human figures was rare in early Anglo-Saxon England, although it was not unknown, and so it can be understood to have held great significance when it was invoked. The examination of traditional iconographic motifs (the zoomorphs, and the less favoured human figure) can thus be counterbalanced by analysis of the evolution of a non-traditional image motif strongly aligned with the alien culture, namely the cross. In identifying and examining both the form and the wider cultural role of all such motifs it becomes possible to trace any significant shifts to either form or function that may be associated with the cultural contact between Anglo-Saxons and the incoming Christian art and its associated imagery.

2.2 Traditional Iconography: Germanic Origins and Anglo-Saxon Innovation

It is always difficult, in academic scholarship, especially in relation to early Anglo-Saxon England, to define the boundaries of an open, general term like "traditional" with regard to a changing culture. Nonetheless, limits must exist in order for coherent discussion to be undertaken. In general, something is considered traditional if it pertains to a longstanding practice or belief,[1] and can therefore be applied to the artistic choices and practices of Anglo-Saxon England in the seventh century. For the purposes of this study, traditional art will be understood to be that which was produced during and after the Germanic settlement of Britain, from the fifth century through to the seventh, and which shares an aesthetic vocabulary with the art of the migration period (*c*. 376-568) and the wider early Germanic world.[2] This artwork, then, is tied to a number of Germanic tribal cultures that eventually coalesced in 'England' as the Anglo-Saxons,[3] and displays little concern for the artwork produced by either the native Britons or Romanised Britons, both of whom are understood to have had their own flourishing artistic traditions, albeit in a diminished capacity, alongside the more dominant artistic culture of the Anglo-Saxons during this period.[4]

The type of Germanic art under consideration here is that characterised primarily by the animal ornament or zoomorphic patterns found on metalwork from the fourth to the

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[1] 'Traditional, adj. and n. OED

[2] Although there is some dispute about the boundary dates, the Germanic migrations, with which this study is most concerned, essentially occurred within the first phase of the migration period, being mostly completed by the sixth century. A second phase of migration occurred, primarily in Eastern Europe, and is thought to persist until and even into the eighth century. For further discussion of the migration period in Europe see: Todd, 1992; Hines, Høilund Nielsen and Siegmund, 1999; Curta, 2001; the essays in Noble, 2006; Halsall, 2008

[3] The decline of the Roman province of Britannia and increased Germanic settlement of the late fourth and fifth century is a complicated historical process involving the withdrawal of Roman support, hostile pressure at the borders of the territory, and the influx of numerous Germanic peoples from different tribes and regions. For a more complete discussion of this history see: Reece, 1980: 77-92; Salway, 1981; Jones, 1996; Loseby, 2000: 319-370

[4] Snyder, 1998: 217-226

seventh centuries:[5] in other words, that which is contemporary with the Anglo-Saxon material.[6] Continental Germanic exemplars are often sought when identifying and understanding certain iconographic types that are found in early Anglo-Saxon art, as continental material bearing these Germanic motifs is often more plentiful or more comfortably dated and contextualized than their Anglo-Saxon counterparts.[7] This interrelating of contemporary or near contemporary continental material with Anglo-Saxon examples reinforces the idea that this type of art was part of a shared Germanic tradition.

Anglo-Saxon motifs commonly cited (along with their continental Germanic counterparts) often involve the human figure: the helmeted warrior, often holding spears, that feature on the foils of the sixth-century Sutton Hoo helmet, buried in an elaborate ship burial in the early seventh century,[8] and the seventh-century Finglesham buckle, which have been linked to a number of helmet foils and dies found in Sweden.[9] The motif of the man between two beasts, as seen on the Sutton Hoo purse lid, is also linked to motifs used in contiguous Germanic societies, again by means of the Swedish dies.[10] Likewise, the horse and rider motif, which has its origins in the art of Roman late antiquity, was adapted and modified within Germanic contexts,[11] and appears on helmet foils and buckles in both Anglo-Saxon and continental examples.[12]

More common, however, are the zoomorphic forms, both recognizable and abstracted into anonymity, found on both the continental and Anglo-Saxon material, that

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[5] Salin, 1904: 214-290; Åberg, 1926: 159-160; Bakka, 1958: 4; Chadwick-Hawkes, 1961: 68-70; Speake, 1980: 10
[6] See Chapter 1: 30-32
[7] See e.g.: Heather, 1999; Curta, 2001; Barnish and Marazzi, 2007; Halsall, 2008; Hedeager, 2011; Effros, 2012
[8] Bruce-Mitford, 1974: 210–222; 1978: 186–9, fig. 140. Despite the earlier date of production as well as the possibility of a Scandinavian origin, the Sutton Hoo helmet was an heirloom, visible and therefore influencing iconographic traditions into the seventh century. Bruce Mitford, 1975: 350, 412-413; Hicks, 1993: 64-70; Karkov, 2011: 21
[9] See below: 124-127
[10] See below: 130-131
[11] Quast, 2009; Hawkes, forthcoming
[12] See below: 127-130

display similar traits.[13] One of the most common of these found across the Continent is the

motif of a predatory bird. Often identified specifically as an eagle or a raven by scholars,

the iconography of this motif shares a similar typology,[14] regardless of its material makeup

and its place of manufacture. Predatory birds could be depicted in profile, as can be seen

in two sets of small Frankish gold and garnet fibulae (Fig. 2.1),[15] discovered near Cologne

and dated to the sixth or seventh centuries, or the pair of Ostrogothic gilt silver and garnet

fittings (Fig. 2.2),[16] identified as seated birds, dating from the fifth or sixth century and

found near the Black Sea in Taman, Russia. They could also be depicted more frontally,

with wings tucked in on either side and the head usually turned in profile, as with the two

large copper-alloy garment fasteners (Fig. 2.3),[17] from northern Italy in the later sixth

century. Bird heads were also commonly included as decorative elements of larger

decorative programs, as can be seen in a copper-alloy, rectangular belt buckle decorated

with interlaced vines and spirals on the body and a bird head affixed opposite the loop of

the buckle (Fig. 2.4),[18] dating from the fifth or sixth century and discovered in Gurzuf on

the Crimean peninsula. Birds were depicted with other animals as part of a predator-and-

prey motif, a common iconographic type that dates back to the classical and even pre-

classical world,[19] which can be seen in the incised image of a bird above a fish on the early

sixth-century silver strap-end or belt tongue (Fig. 2.5).[20]

The fish, in addition to being an object of predation, also features as a recognizable

image type on its own within the wider Germanic world, although by no means as

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[13] Creatures like griffins, bird-headed, winged horses, and cicadas, a flying insect, feature in the Germanic menagerie of zoomorphic forms but may be considered as exotic hybrids rather than Germanic motifs. Nonetheless, they do not appear as part of the Anglo-Saxon material. (Römisch-Germanisches Museum, Köln, D 6626; D 845; D 844)
[14] See below, 80-84
[15] Römisch-Germanisches Museum, Köln, 57,88-89; 50,262-263
[16] Römisch-Germanisches Museum, Köln, D 322 a,b
[17] Römisch-Germanisches Museum, Köln, D 400; D 6410
[18] Römisch-Germanisches Museum, Köln, D 279
[19] Wittkower, 1977: 16-44
[20] Römisch-Germanisches Museum, Köln, D960

ubiquitous as the predatory bird. The motif usually depicted by a simple silhouette, with a long, narrow body with a pointed head and bifurcated or fan-shaped tail, which can be filled with more or less ornate decoration, as demonstrated by a small Frankish gold and garnet cloisonné brooch (Fig. 2.6),[21] from an unknown excavation site in France, made in the sixth century. Equally fish feature as discrete motifs within more complex decorative schemes - in gold and garnet cloisonné at the centre of the body of an ornate Merovingian looped fibula from Jouy-le-Comte, France (Fig. 2.7), dated to the mid-sixth century. Other aquatic creatures also appear in Germanic zoomorphic art. A Frankish gilt-silver and garnet pin from the sixth or seventh century (Fig. 2.8),[22] has been identified as a dolphin but its appearance is closer to that of a composite of a bird-and-fish form.

Serpents appear with considerable frequency on different types of objects, in groups to twist and interlace on the decorative surface. They can be seen looping and biting on the face of a seventh-century iron buckle (Fig. 2.9),[23] with silver and brass inlay, found in Northern France, and on sixth- or seventh-century Frankish, copper-alloy, openwork belt fittings (Fig. 2.10),[24] where a number of snakes radiate from a central terminal within an enclosing circle.

Boar motifs also appear regularly in continental Germanic material, again, both as an isolated and independent form and as part of more complex decorative schemes. A small, silver, rectangular buckle, found in Taman, Russia (Fig. 2.11),[25] dating to the fifth or sixth century, is ornamented by a boar with its tusks clearly on display. The heads and forelegs of boars can also be seen on the foot of the ornately decorated buckle (Fig.

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[21] V&A, M.120-1939
[22] Römisch-Germanisches Museum, Köln, D 569
[23] V&A, 4510-1858
[24] Römisch-Germanisches Museum, Köln, D 483
[25] Römisch-Germanisches Museum, Köln, D 271

2.12),[26] dating from the sixth century, found in Åker, Norway, where it forms part of the wider complex and shifting iconography of the buckle.

Horses too appear with some frequency although they are usually presented either as part of the horse-and-rider motif, already mentioned, or as a discrete image rather than being incorporated into decoration inhabited by multiple zoomorphs. In addition to the Swedish foils, the horse-and-rider motif features on a pair of sixth- or seventh-century Frankish silver gilt pins (Fig. 2.13)[27] and in an Alamanian copper-alloy openwork belt fitting dated to the early seventh century (Fig. 2.14).[28] Horses as discrete image types in Germanic art seem to have a common form, regardless of the material of which they are made and the detail of their ornamentation. An ornate version can be seen on a sixth-century Frankish silver-gilt brooch (Fig. 2.15),[29] where the basic form of the horse is emphasised and ornamented by incised grooves and dots, which highlight parts of the body and mane, and the eye is set with a small cabochon garnet. A less ornate version is found in a contemporary copper-alloy brooch (Fig. 2.16);[30] once gilded, but now very worn, this brooch is decorated with only the barest lines to delineate the legs and the mane of the horse, while the body is smooth and unadorned.

Anonymous or unidentifiable beasts are also common on migration period Germanic metalwork.[31] These are distinct from simple geometric pattern by the inclusion of recognisable, albeit often stylized or schematic, representations of eyes, jaws, limbs and feet. Apart from these features, however, the beast is depicted in general terms or abstracted to a degree so that no specific details that would identify its *genus* are present. This is the case with the two unidentifiable beasts twisted together on a copper alloy strap-

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[26] Kulturhistorisk Museum, Oslo
[27] Römisch-Germanisches Museum, Köln, D 586 a-b
[28] Metropolitan Museum, 17.192.164
[29] Metropolitan Museum, 17.192.186
[30] Metropolitan Museum, 17.192.187
[31] For more in depth discussion of the anonymous beast see below, 107-110

end found in Hungary and dated to the early-seventh century (Fig. 2.17).[32] The decoration looks initially like an abstract pattern of lines, but closer viewing reveals two sets of jaws, eyes, limb joints and exaggerated paws, resolving the image into two extremely stylised beasts of indeterminate type.

Despite such shared vocabularies in early Germanic art, regardless of the specific location of production, the material is by no means homogeneous. Individual territories or regions imparted their own responses to the common tradition, making it distinct. In this manner, the Anglo-Saxon iterations, while sharing a similar typology, also demonstrate details that illustrate an Anglo-Saxon sensibility; it is these that scholars have invoked to differentiate this type of art from that found on the Continent.[33] For instance, while the predatory bird is one of the most prevalent Germanic, zoomorphic forms, it appears both in profile and frontally in contemporary continental art, but is depicted overwhelmingly in profile in the art of the early Anglo-Saxons, although the frontal representation was not completely abandoned, being revived in later Insular contexts, as in the pages of the mid to late seventh-century Book of Durrow.[34]

Likewise, double-headed animals of various types, including birds, are more common in continental, Germanic art, than in Anglo-Saxon England. For example, a silver belt buckle found in Kertch on the coast of the Crimean Peninsula (Fig. 2.18),[35] dating from the fifth or sixth centuries, takes the form of a snarling double-headed boar. Similarly, a double-headed bird appears on a gold and garnet cloisonné on a small pendant suspended from the base (Fig. 2.19),[36] so the bird heads are upside down to a viewer, in an example of sixth-century Ostrogothic jewellery. A variation of this type of imagery can be

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[32] British Museum, 2008,8013.1
[33] Wolfram, 1988: 5; Todd, 1992: 8-10; Noble, 2006: 29; Kulikowski, 2007: 46; Halsall, 2008: 17, 418; James, 2009: 102-128
[34] Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS A. 4. 5.(MS 57). Henderson, 1987; Meehan, 1996. See Chapter 4: 214-215
[35] Römisch-Germanisches Museum, Köln, D 272
[36] Römisch-Germanisches Museum, Köln, D 715

seen in the double bird-headed, S-shaped fibula (Fig. 2.20),[37] made from copper-alloy and set with gold and (originally) some form of precious or semi-precious stone, dating from the late-sixth or early-seventh century in the Lombard regions of Northern Italy. The S-shaped brooch, a form originating in the Roman period,[38] easily adapts to the form of a two-headed beast, lending itself most effectively to the sinuous form of a serpent, and double-headed serpents, distinguished by the open jaws biting back into the body, which can be seen in two sixth-century Frankish S-shaped brooches. These are made from different materials and include different types of ornamentation, perhaps suggesting use by wearers of different social status. One is cast-silver (Fig. 2.21),[39] ornamented with gilt and fields of geometric pattern along the body set with sizable garnets for eyes; the other is made from a copper alloy and displays less intricate ornamentation composed of irregular patterns of punched dots and rings filling most of the body (Fig. 2.22),[40] although inset garnets still mark the eyes of the serpent heads. This type of brooch, which lends itself so readily to double-headed representations of animals, although not entirely absent from the Anglo-Saxon material, is limited to a handful of surviving examples.

    In addition to this shared, but distinct, visual language, is the materiality and aesthetic of migration-era Germanic metalwork. The extensive use of cloisonné, the choice of precious materials such as gold, silver and garnet, the impulse to fill the available space of an object with decoration and animate every flourish, and the complexity of pattern that interlaces and intertwines layers of pattern, create a common thread between the contemporary, or near contemporary, examples regardless of their place of production. However, it is in that last aspect that Anglo-Saxon art can again be differentiated from its continental counterparts, taking the layers of patterning, the intricacy of interlace, and the

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[37] The Walters Art Museum (WAM), 54.2440
[38] Hunter, 2010: 93; Joy, 2014: 320-321
[39] Metropolitan Museum, 17.192.1
[40] Metropolitan Museum, 17.192.2

complexity and exuberance of the decoration to extremes. For example, the early seventh-century, Lombard radiate-headed brooch (Fig.2.23),[41] now in the British Museum, provides an excellent example of an ornate decorative scheme. The brooch is silver, gilded in parts for contrast. The semi-circular head-plate is filled with two gilt repoussé serpents, interlaced and biting their bodies, bordered by a double band of silver incised with geometric pattern. Eleven small posts connect to an arc of silver, also incised with the same geometric pattern, which terminate in knobs, two of which are missing, that appear to be animal heads. The foot-plate is roughly oval with a central field of four interlaced repoussé serpents, again in gilt, bordered by a double band of geometric patterned silver which leads down to the terminal shaped like an animal head, mirroring the form of the animal mask knobs of the head-plate. The foot-plate has three bird head lappets, although it is assumed in the interest of symmetry that one is missing, and a double-headed beast of indeterminate variety at the base. The decorative program is complex and layered, incorporating multiple decorative elements and numerous animals, but at the same time the component parts are discreet and easily discernible, as opposed to the density of composition, fluidity of visual perception and, as will be argued, multivalency of meaning characterising comparative Anglo-Saxon objects such as a pair of gold miniature buckles with bird heads and serpentine filigree found in Kent (Fig. 2.64), a gold disc brooch with zoomorphic ornament inset bosses found in Oxfordshire (Fig. 3.30). or, and perhaps especially, the gold belt buckle found in Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo (Fig. 2.96), all of which will be discussed in much further detail.[42] Of the traditional Anglo-Saxon art it thus clearly can be said that animal ornament dominates and these zoomorphs,

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[41] British Museum, 1851,0806.10

[42] See further discussion of the complexity of Anglo-Saxon zoomorphic interlace see below: 112-116. For discussion of the patterns within Anglo-Saxon metalwork see Chapter 3: 188-195

although displaying regional and cultural variations unique to the Anglo-Saxon versions, can be compared with the continental articulations.

2.3 Fish, Birds, and Beasts: Anglo-Saxon Zoomorphic Art

Found on a wide assortment of objects, the zoomorphic ornament of Anglo-Saxon art ranges from animals naturalistically portrayed, to stylized but still recognizable beasts, to complex patterns of interlacing zoomorphic creatures that form patterns within patterns on the surfaces of the objects.[43] Amongst this wide range of zoomorphic depictions is a type of decoration that is recognizable as a specific type or species of animal, and that which seems to defy categorization, being anonymous or perhaps fantastical 'beasts'.

The limited material record for the seventh century in Anglo-Saxon England, in many ways a period of cultural contact, dialogue and transition,[44] makes it difficult to make wide claims about the tendencies and choices of the artists and their patrons, but it is nevertheless possible to identify certain apparently enduring trends across this period and it is worth considering these further. It should be noted that the zoomorphic decoration of Anglo-Saxon art is most often invoked by scholars of the history of artistic style who seek to track the evolution of a decorative style chronologically. Thus, identifying the apparent evolution of the ornament from Style I to Style II does seem to dominate the scholarship on animal ornament, and even more recently scholars, such as Karen Høilund Nielsen or Nöel Adams,[45] have attempted to track the origin of the 'style' as well as its subsequent chronology in this way. Much attention has thus been paid to the prominence of a shoulder or the curve of a claw. Speake, for instance, drawing on the earlier work of Salin and Kendrick, discussed these individual features in great detail, before concluding that by

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[43] Nordenfalk, 1977: 17

[44] For discussions of this aspect of early Anglo-Saxon England, see e.g. Stenton, 1943; Hunter Blair, 1963; 2003; the essays in Campbell, 1982; Higham, 1994; Jones, 1996; Henderson, 1999; Kirby, 2000; and the essays in Charles-Edwards, 2003

[45] Høilund Nielsen, 1998; 1999;Adams, 2004; 2010; 2011

'exploding' an animal, or emphasizing its component parts, the Anglo-Saxons were perhaps trying to control/dominate the animal.[46] It was this trend in the scholarship which has no doubt encouraged Hicks, Dickinson and Høilund Nielsen, among others, to explore the potential identities of the beasts thus depicted.[47] This impulse to identify and classify arguably originates in modern society's dependence on taxonomising, naming things, which has been part of scientific education since the eighteenth century.[48] However the lack of consensus or even clear criteria for identifying most zoomorphs illustrates the problematic nature of such an approach. Rather than attempting to identify and name these iconographic motifs in order to situate them within the later historical and literary narratives, and in doing so elucidate their potential symbolic significances, analysis should first focus on the visual conventions used to depict the imagery and attempt to decipher what meaning and significance could be communicated by the forms themselves.

In order to understand the significance of the zoomorphic motifs in early Anglo-Saxon England it is important to examine how they were depicted in order to suggest why they were used. While focusing solely on identifying the animals portrayed in specific examples of zoomorphic decoration can be limiting to our understanding of the potential purpose(s) and function(s) of the ornament, much as considering only the style of the animal parts in order to compile a chronology, it can nevertheless be useful to have some understanding and recognition of which animals might have been selected and what types of objects they were used to ornament. It is also important to have some understanding of what characteristics were deemed to be the defining aspects of each animal; it is this that allows the creature to be abstracted, while still allowing for it (and its potential symbolism) to be recognized by the contemporary viewer.

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[46] Salin, 1904: 241; Kendrick, 1938: 89; Speake, 1980: 65-76
[47] Hicks: 1986; 1993a; 1993b; Dickinson and Härke: 1992; Høilund Nielsen, 1999; Dickinson, 2005, 2009; Fern, 2010
[48] For more information about Linnaeus (1707-1779) and the history of taxonomy see Ereshefsky, 2000; Farber, 2000: 6-21

2.3a Definable and Indefinable Beasts

With this in mind it can be noted that the recognisable types of creatures featured in traditional Anglo-Saxon art tend to have been defined by means of a small number of salient features, making the animal legible despite any abstraction or truncation of the form. These key signifiers arise from longstanding traditions of representational types and remain consistent across centuries and media as is clear by their shared use in Anglo-Saxon and continental art. In this, certain features that define the key characteristics of the animals seem to have been consciously selected when identification was deemed valuable or necessary; this implies that these features also held some significance in terms of defining the nature of the beast, as well as helping to identify it. While attempting to categorize the animals found in early Anglo-Saxon art, however, it is important to remember that by far the most common type of creature used was one that must be simply denoted 'anonymous'; these zoomorphs lack the key signifiers to differentiate them sufficiently, making it impossible to satisfactorily identify them. The absence of such identifying characteristics amongst the unidentifiable creatures, in counterpoint to the simple features used to indicate the zoomorphs that can be identified, strongly suggests that they were intended to remain anonymous, and so ambiguous, termed simply 'bipeds' or 'quadrupeds'.[49] It follows from this that the decision to include details to identify other specific zoomorphs was also, necessarily, deliberate.

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[49] Webster and Backhouse, 1991; Hawkes, 1996; 1997; Whitfield, 1997; Dickinson, 2003. See also discussions of the equally anonymous/ambiguous creatures in early 'Celtic' material: Thomas, 1963: 49-52; 1986:166; Hicks, 1993b: 49-50; Henderson, 1996:15; Foster, 1996:74; Mack, 1997: 8-9; Carver, 1999: 18; Macleod and Wilson, 2001

2.3b The Boar

Among the creatures most easily recognised, whether portrayed as a full-length creature or simply as a head, is the boar with its prominent tusk.[50] These animals would have been known as wild, dangerous, and powerful beasts that populated the forest, capable both of great speed and great destruction.[51] Although the hunting of wild boar would have once been necessary as a food source, by the seventh century the Anglo-Saxons had domesticated pigs and so the hunting of boars would have become the purview of elite social groups.[52] They would have been seen as prize quarry for the strongest hunters and a source of admiration and perhaps fear for the destruction they could cause to the landscape or an unwary person suddenly facing a pair of sharp tusks.[53] Indeed it was the idea of the boar as denizen of the forest, a place somewhat removed from and foreign to the spaces of domesticated Anglo-Saxon habitation, and of its tusks that is preserved in the wisdom poem, *Maxims II*, transcribed in the eleventh century but generally accepted as preserving verses and knowledge that originated much earlier in oral form:[54]

> The wild hawk shall dwell on the glove,
> The outcast wolf alone in the grove,
> The boar in the wood, tusk strong.[55]

Despite its brevity the verse reveals that the boar is grouped with a hawk and a wolf, two other strong and dangerous animals, both predators, suggesting an element of hazard is inherent in any interaction with them. However each animal is given its own place to inhabit,[56] suggesting that the danger of the beasts is minimized if they are kept in their

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[50] Speake, 1980: 78-79
[51] Freethy, 1983: 250-252; Neville, 1999: 6-8; Sykes, 2011: 327-335; Aberth, 2012: 179
[52] Hooke, 1989: 122; Sykes, 2011: 338
[53] Whitelock, 1964: 92-93; Freethy, 1983: 250-252; Neville, 1999: 6-8
[54] London, Cotton Tibreius B. i. dated by Ker to the early eleventh century (Ker, 1957: 253-54) and accepted by O'Brien O'Keeffe (2001 edition). For discussion of *Maxims II* and its earlier oral versions see Bredehoft, 2009: 21-22
[55] Hafuc sceal on glofe wilde gewunian, wulf sceal on bearowe, earm anhaga, eofor sceal on holte, toðmægenes trum. (*Maxims II*, ll 17-20, ASPR 6:56; Williamson, 2011: 31)
[56] Williamson, 2011: 31

proper place. Man's mastery over these creatures is overt in the case of the hawk, tamed

and controlled so its proper place is on the glove, but it can be argued that it is being

asserted in the subtext of the verse for the other two, both of which, should they venture to

leave their proper place in the forest, can be neutralized by men on a hunt.

In addition to this verse, Speake has surmised how Tacitus, in the first century CE,

writing about a Germanic tribe east of the Baltic, describes the association of boars with

the worship of a powerful goddess and recounts how her acolytes wore the emblem of a

boar for protection instead of armour.[57] Speake also recounts how Saxo-Grammaticus,

writing in the late-twelfth or early-thirteenth century, mentions the boar's head as an

emblem, amongst the Danes, of Woden-Odin (who figures in many Anglo-Saxon royal

lineages found in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*).[58] There are also associations of the boar

with the Scandinavian deities Freyr and Freyja,[59] and with fertility which may explain the

presence of perforated boar teeth and tusks, perhaps worn as talismans, in Anglo-Saxon

graves of both men and women.[60] While Speake has usefully gathered these sources

together to elucidate understandings of the boar in Anglo-Saxon art, these comments about

the beliefs of Germanic tribes and Scandinavian cultures must be viewed critically and

cannot be assumed to correlate directly with Anglo-Saxon beliefs and cultural traditions in

the ways Speake implies. Nevertheless, in general ways, it is plausible that similar

associations existed in the Anglo-Saxon pantheon giving the boar significance, as a

symbol, in Anglo-Saxon society. In other words, while the lack of closely contemporary

written accounts concerning boars, or other animals, in Anglo-Saxon England renders

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[57] *Germania* XLV: Matrem deum venerantur: insigne superstitionis, formas aprorum gestant; id pro armis omnique tutela: securum deae cultorem etiam inter hostes praestat (Önnerfors, 1983: 30; Birley, 1999: 61); see further, Chaney, 1970: 124-125; Speake, 1980: 81; Hicks, 1993a: 72; Hawkes, 1997: 315-316

[58] Saxo-Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum* I (Elton, 1894: 49); Chaney, 1970: 126; Speake, 1980: 79; Hicks, 1993a: 72; Hawkes, 1997:315-316

[59] Crossley-Holland, 1980: 198-200; Speake, 1980: 79, 81; Davidson, 1993: 84, 108; Lindow, 2002: 100, 124, 153

[60] Meaney, 1981: 125; Arnold, 1988: 105; Wilson, 1992: 109; Hicks, 1993a: 24-25; Pollington, 2008: 228

clear understanding of their role in the culture and as an artistic motif difficult, it does not completely negate attempts to understand the imagery.

Iconographically the boar motif was common in the Mediterranean world and the wider Roman Empire (Fig. 2.24).[61] It was the standard for several Roman legions, including the *Legio vigesima Valeria Victrix*, which formed part of Claudius' invasion of Britain in 43 CE as well as Agricola's campaigns in Northern Britain and Scotland in 78-84 CE.[62] Such emblems (Fig. 2.25),[63] like that of the boar from *Valeria Victrix*, are thought to be one of the effective ways that image motifs were transmitted throughout Roman territories and into neighbouring cultures.[64] Whether this is indeed the case, the Germanic, and more specifically Anglo-Saxon depictions of boars present a more schematic and often abstracted version than the naturalistic animal images found in the Roman world.

The more stylised, or perhaps symbolic, motif of the boar in Anglo-Saxon England remains clearly identifiable but is reduced to a small number of key visual signifiers that differentiate it as a recognisable boar from other zoomorphs. As illustrated by a late sixth- or seventh-century copper-alloy figurine from Cambridgeshire (Fig. 2.26),[65] the boar is commonly depicted as a quadruped, with the legs terminating in a manner akin to hooves or trotters, as opposed to being extended into paws as is the case with depictions of most other quadrupeds including other animals, like horses,[66] with hooves in life. The body is delineated in such a way as to emphasize a ridge along the back. The head is extended to form a snout, and features narrowed, oval eyes and tusks, which are clearly depicted.[67] The reduction of the animal's form to these few significant parts suggests that there was

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[61] Römisch-Germanisches Museum, Köln
[62] Southern, 2008: 90
[63] British Museum, 1911,0206.1
[64] Wittkower, 1977
[65] British Museum, 1904,1010.1
[66] For discussion of Anglo-Saxon depictions of horses see further below: 74-85
[67] For further examples of the Anglo-Saxon boar motif see further below: 64-74

something important to those parts that represented what was seen as potent or integral to the beast as a whole. For the boar, it is the tusks, visibly protruding from the lower jaw which remain present despite any abstraction or truncation of the form, and more than any other signifier (such as the bristles along the back of the animal), serve to identify the beast, often being highlighted by contrasting material to draw a viewer's notice. Indeed, the attention paid to the tusks of the boar in the imagery, above all other features, recalls the "tusk strong" beast of the gnomic verse in *Maxims II* and suggests that they were objects of some significance, perhaps both fascination and fear, for the Anglo-Saxons.

Recalling the tribal customs mentioned by Tacitus, the boar appears as a potent symbol for warriors in *Beowulf* where they are mentioned on helmets as fiercely guarding their bearer's lives:[68]

> It was of beaten gold,
> Princely headgear hooped and hasped
> By a weapon-smith who had worked wonders
> In days gone by and adorned it with boar-shapes;
> Since then it had resisted every sword.[69]

This account refers to events of a distant fifth-century Geatish past, but is recorded in an Old English written version, commonly dated to the tenth or eleventh century although some scholars suggest that the manuscript has an earlier eighth-century date.[70] Regardless, the poem's preservation in later times indicates that it was clearly still deemed relevant, suggesting a cultural continuum in military perceptions of boars. Imagery of warriors with

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[68] Webster and Backhouse, 1991: 59

[69] *Beowulf*, ll. 1450-1454: since geweorðad, befongen freawrasnum, swa hine fyrndagum worhte wæpna smið, wundrum teode, besette swinlicum, þæt hine syðþan no brond ne beadomecas bitan ne meahton (Klaeber, 2008: 50; Heaney, 1999: 48); see also the boar banner given to Beowulf by Hrothgar (*Beowulf*, ll. 1020-1022, 2152-2154; Klaeber, 2008: 36, 73)

[70] The precise dating of *Beowulf*, both the surviving manuscript (British Library Cotton MS Vitellius A.XV, f.132) and the composition of the poem, remains a point of somewhat heated contention in the scholarship. Most scholars set the date of the manuscript to the early-eleventh century through different methods and with varying degrees of accuracy. For discussion of the later dating of the *Beowulf* manuscript see: Ker, 1968; Kiernan, 1981; 1984; Dumville, 1988; Stanley, 2002; Frank, 2007; Damico, 2014. A smaller but vocal group argues that the surviving manuscript is a copy of an earlier eighth-century exemplar. For further discussion of the earlier date see: Sisam, 1953b; Fulk, 1992: 164-68, 381-92; Lapidge, 2000; Clark, 2009; Neidorf, 2013; and the essays in Neidorf, 2014. I am very grateful to Simon Thompson for discussion on this matter.

boar crests on their helmets can be found on pressblech foils, themselves often ornamenting helmets, dating from the seventh century in the Germanic world. A pair of armed warriors (Fig. 2.27),[71] each wearing a helmet with cheek guards, detailed with squares of lines in alternating directions, possibly representing ornamented foil panels, and surmounted by a large, clearly rendered boar crest, can be seen on one of the dies found at Torslunda, Sweden. A mounted warrior (Fig. 2.28),[72] again bearing a helmet with a very large and clearly depicted boar crest, can be seen engaged in a fierce battle on a historiated foil on the seventh-century helmet found in grave seven at Valsgärde, Sweden.

Although such imagery of boar-helmeted warriors has not survived from Anglo-Saxon England, the helmets themselves, bearing clearly, if simply, recognisable boar crests, have been recovered. The so-called Pioneer helmet (Fig. 2.29),[73] dated to the seventh century, was excavated from a grave in Wollaston, Nottinghamshire.[74] It is of relatively simple construction, an iron skull-cap with large cheek-pieces and a narrow nasal guard. The ornamentation is likewise simple, comprising three incised lines around the edges and a small boar figurine at the apex of the crest. Although significantly corroded, the curved ridge of the back of the boar and its extended snout can still be seen. The details of the eyes and tusks, likely originally highlighted in contrasting material, have been lost to the corrosion. The Benty-Grange helmet (Fig. 2.30),[75] dated to the mid-seventh century, and excavated from the Benty-Grange barrow in Derbyshire,[76] is better preserved. An iron-framed, horn-covered helmet with a small nose guard is crested with an ornate copper-alloy boar, decorated with silver studs in the body and gilt-silver accents

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[71] Historiska museet, Stockholm, SHM 4325
[72] Museum Gustavianum, Uppsala
[73] Royal Armouries, Leeds
[74] Medows, 1997
[75] Museums Sheffield, J93.1189
[76] Webster and Backhouse, 1991: 59-60 cat no. 46

at the limb joints, the eyes and the tusks.[77] The eyes are narrow ovals set with garnets,

giving the boar a somewhat malevolent look, perhaps appropriate for battle armament.

The ridge on the boar's back would have been further exaggerated with bristles that are

thought to have been set into a 2mm channel to form a plume (Fig. 2.31). In both these

examples, despite the differences in ornamental detail, the key signifiers that indicate the

animal is a boar are present and where possible they were highlighted.

Boar ornament does not just appear as the crest of a helmet but was also worked

into larger decorative schemes. The helmet found in the grave under Mound 1 at Sutton

Hoo was an heirloom object (Fig. 2.32),[78] possibly even a century old when it was buried

in the early-seventh century,[79] and thought to be of Scandinavian manufacture or

influenced by such artistic trends.[80] For the purposes of this study, however, the artistic

program will be considered within the context of seventh-century Anglo-Saxon

iconography as the helmet's prolonged use, indicated by its age prior to burial, and

assumed visibility, suggested by its burial in a large, princely grave amongst other high

status objects with ritual and public function,[81] would have likely not looked out of place

in the artistic trends throughout the period of its use. The helmet's iconographic program

is both dense and complicated, encompassing numerous types of decoration, materials, and

techniques.[82] The boar forms a very small part of the larger scheme but remains visible,

recognizable, and significant. The helmet has an ornate, zoomorphic face-mask and the

boar is be found articulated as a snarling head at the terminal of each eyebrow (Fig. 2.33),

facing outwards at the temples of the mask. These heads are cast from copper-alloy and

were originally gilded with inset garnets for the eyes. As with the full figured depictions

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[77] Bruce-Mitford and Luscombe: 1974: 223–252
[78] British Museum, 1939,1010.93
[79] Bruce-Mitford, 1978: 224; Marzinzik, 2007. For a discussion of heirloom helmets see Norr, 2005
[80] Marzinzik, 2007
[81] Bruce-Mitford, 1978: 138–231; Marzinzik, 2007; Norr, 2008; Williams, 2011: 106
[82] For a fuller discussion of the iconographic program of the Sutton Hoo helmet see below: 126-128 for the figural panels; 120-121 for the zoomorphic face-mask.

of the boar, the head is extended into a blunt snout with tusks clearly extending upwards from the bottom jaw. There is a small ridge visible just at the back of the head above the eyes, which would notionally extend the length of the boar's back, if it were not a truncated image. Alternatively the curved, ridged, form of the eyebrows might be seen as the backs of the boars. A similar terminal, shaped like a boar, dated to the first half of the seventh century, was a chance find near Horncastle, Lincolnshire (Fig. 2.34).[83] The silver terminal, parcel-gilt, maintains the elongated head shape ending in a blunt ended snout and small garnet set eyes. The tusks, gilded for contrast, are clearly visible in the mouth and extending nearly to the top of the terminal. A raised ridge begins behind the eyes and extends back to the edge of the terminal, bisecting the skull into two areas, which are each, in turn, decorated by a crouching quadruped. Thus even as an isolated head, the key signifiers which differentiate the boar from other quadrupeds - extended snout, ridged back, and highlighted tusks - are included where possible.

As the choices informing which aspects of the boar to highlight in these schematic representations must be seen as significant, so too perhaps was the placement of the motif within a larger decorative program or on the physical object itself. The importance given to the settings of the boars are again invoked in *Beowulf*:

> Boar-shapes flashed
> Above their cheek-guards, the brightly forged
> Work of goldsmiths, watching over
> Those stern-faced men.[84]

The helmet figurines are placed at the apex of the helmet, along the crest, at the top of the head. The Horncastle boar head is thought to be the terminal of a narrow crest,[85] placing it at either the front, on the forehead, or back of the helmet's skullcap. The boar head

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[83] PAS, PAS-5D5B56
[84] *Beowulf*, ll. 303-306: Eofor-līc scionom, ofer hlēor-bergan: gehroden golde, fāh ond fýr-heard, ferh wearde hēold: gūþ-mōd grummon. (Heaney, 2000: 20-23)
[85] Barton, 2012: http://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/506705 (Accessed: Sep 26, 2014)

terminals on the Sutton Hoo helmet are placed over the temple and near the eyehole. The locations of the boars on all the helmets can be argued to fit the description from the *Beowulf* passage, above the cheek-guards however they also, more tellingly, mark places of vulnerability for a warrior in battle. The top of the head, below the crest of a helmet, is one of the most vulnerable parts of the body and therefore one that is particularly vulnerable to attack in the chaos of a battle. The custom of reinforcing that part of a protective helmet might also have led to the decision to ornament the crest with a fierce, powerful beast.[86] The forehead or the back of the skull both present the likely targets of a blow, so it is not surprising that additional layers of more metaphoric protection might be welcome to ward against that outcome. Lastly, the area over the temples is one of thin bone, where a single blow could be damaging or even deadly, and next to an opening over the eye, where a warrior could be blinded or his metal protection breeched. The use of a specific type of imagery, the boar, at these points of vulnerability in battle, should not, therefore, be seen as simple decorative flourish or artistic embellishment but as a layer of apotropaic protection to enhance the helmet and guard the warriors who wore them.

The set of shoulder clasps found in Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo are also pieces of warrior armament, functional or symbolic, decorated with a prominent boar motif (Fig. 2.35).[87] Made of gold and decorated with garnet and millefiori cloisonné work, the clasps recall elements of Roman armour prototypes, perhaps as a deliberate reference to the Roman past.[88] A single clasp is made from two plates that mirror each other, which are closed and held together by a pin. Each plate bears the same decorative program which is repeated on the accompanying clasp, a central rectangle of geometric pattern of garnet and millefiori cloisonné bordered by interlacing garnet serpents with blue glass eyes set into

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[86] Bruce-Mitford, 1978: 220-224; Filmer-Sankey, 1996: 6; Marzinzik, 2007: 17-31
[87] British Museum, 1939,1010.4–5
[88] Bruce-Mitford, 1978: 533-534; Filmer-Sankey, 1996: 4; Adams, 2010: 83

gold.[89] When closed, both ends of the clasp are decorated by a curved panel depicting a

symmetrical pattern of two boars intersecting each other formed from garnet cloisonné and

set in gold with millefiori accentuating the shoulder joint (Fig. 2.36). The gold

background, between the limbs of the boars, is filled with gold filigree knots and interlace

that upon close inspection resolve into serpents and zoomorphs, each infill design being

slightly different from its counterparts.[90] Like their three dimensional counterparts on the

helmet crests, the Sutton Hoo boars have stocky quadrupedal bodies, with a ridge along the

back, highlighted by a line of small square cloisonné, to indicate the distinctive bristles of

a boar. Their limbs are demarcated by larger joints; the shoulder and hip (picked out in

blue, millefiori glass), which taper down in a stepped manner to end at feet that are blunt,

appearing to roughly approximate trotters. The head is roughly proportional to the body,

with pointed ears curving over the narrow, almond shaped eyes before extending down to

form the elongated and blunted snout. The tusk, also emphasized by the use of blue glass,

protrudes clearly from the lower jaw.

Even without commentary on the purpose of the clasps or the meaning of the boars

inhabiting them, it is possible to gain some information from the artistic choices and

suggest possible interpretations. The shoulder clasps, by recalling Roman-style armour,

create a link between the wearer and the past, perhaps making a statement about lineage

and ancestry,[91] or perhaps suggesting a right to rule as an heir to Roman authority in

England.[92] As noted, the clasps are made from extremely rich and valuable materials; gold,

garnet, and millefiori, and highly decorated with the intricate and delicate imagery,

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[89] Bruce-Mitford, 1978 : fig. 386, 434 and 436
[90] Michael King argues that the gold filigree background of the boars on the shoulder clasps is intended to be a representation of the Fountain of Life of Christian belief from which the boars are drinking. See King, 2014: 89-102
[91] Hicks, 1993a: 71-73; Webster, 1997: 222–223 cat no. 53c; Adams, 2010: 83
[92] Filmer-Sankey, 1996: 1-9; Webster, 1997: 76-77

indicating that they were precious objects intended for a very high status wearer.[93] In this context, the inclusion of the boar, the primary identifiable animal on the shoulder clasps, indicates that it was intended to be recognized because it had some special meaning either to the wearer himself or within the society generally.

The boar's presence upon objects of great value and significance further indicate that it was seen as important within the society that produced these objects. Thus, while the disparate accounts of the possible significances of the boar for the Anglo-Saxons emerged from observations of cultures far removed in distance and in time, the later literary sources and evidence of imagery of boars on protective armour do suggest that it was a powerful apotropaic symbol in keeping with a longstanding Germanic tradition. However insight lies in the decisions made to emphasize certain aspects of the creature to illuminate the meaning of the boar as an artistic motif: the tusks, often exaggerated and highlighted in contrasting material; elongated, blunt snout; the ridged, bristled back; and the joints made distinctive again by contrasting material. These elements are what the eye sees first before the whole of the animal is deciphered; yet these elements of the boar's anatomy could be regarded as embodying that which is admirable, desirable and most immediately recognizable about the living creature. The boar was a large beast, easily weighing over 200 lbs and standing upwards of a meter tall, capable of great strength, stamina, and speed.[94] Often elusive in their native woodlands, they were a challenge to track, but once cornered by hunters, the boar fought viciously, using all its brute strength and razor sharp tusks, often fighting on despite numerous, even mortal, wounds until death.[95] These traits are highlighted by the choice elements used in the schematic Anglo-Saxon depictions of the boar, representing what defined a boar as distinct from all other

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[93] Härke, 1997: 144; Lucy, 2000: 181; Owen-Crocker, 2004: 91-92; Hoggett, 2010: 113; Karkov, 2011: 27-29
[94] Hagan, 2006: 103-104; Albarella, 2010
[95] Thompson, 2006: 65

creatures, as well as being that aspect of the creature which makes it such a dominating

beast and intimidating foe.[96] These qualities of the boar may well be what an Anglo-Saxon

warrior might have wished to have been identified with or embody; signifying prowess

and strength, like the boar itself, or perhaps virility and dominance, like the hunter who

slays a boar, highly desirable qualities in the warrior culture of the Anglo-Saxon world; or

perhaps the apotropaic protection of those qualities against those who would harm the

bearer.

2.3c The Horse

The horse, like the boar, was a familiar Germanic artistic motif but appears to be much less

prevalent by the seventh century in Anglo-Saxon England. Nevertheless, a few examples

of the Anglo-Saxon depictions of horses do survive. In seventh-century art, they are found

(as noted) as a component of the horse-and-rider motif;[97] seen in profile; and depicted in a

truncated form by the head alone. The wider appeal of the imagery of horses is

understandable as they played a significant role in Anglo-Saxon England. The

archaeological record includes a number of horse burials, inhumation as well as cremation,

and horse paraphernalia, such as harnesses, bridles, and even saddles, has been found

intact or reused as jewellery in a number of Anglo-Saxon graves.[98] Based on this type of

archaeological evidence, it has been suggested that horses may have held a place in the

Anglo-Saxons' pre-Christian religious beliefs.[99] Tacitus' description in *Germania* of

worship of horses by a Germanic cult has often been referenced:

> It is also characteristic of the race to seek predictions and warnings from horses.
> [These animals] are nourished at public expense in the same [sacred] groves and
> woods [mentioned earlier]; they are white and have no contact with worldly labour.
> Once they are burdened with the sacred chariot, the priest and king or prince of the

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[96] Freethy, 1983: 250-252; Sykes, 2011: 327-335; Aberth, 2012: 179
[97] For discussion of the horse-and-rider motif in Anglo-Saxon England see below: 127-130
[98] For summary, see Fern, 2005: 43-46
[99] Speake, 1980: 81; Davidson, 1988: 53; Wilson, 1992: 101-103; Williams, 2001: 207; Fern, 2010: 128-151

state accompany them and observe their neighing and snorting. No other augury commands greater faith, not only among the common people, but also among the nobles and among the priests. For they think that they are the servants of the gods and share their knowledge.[100]

The discovery of horse burials in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries,[101] and alongside humans in shared graves,[102] has led to the argument that there may have been an Anglo-Saxon cult of horses with practices similar to those described in the first century on the Continent.[103] However, while the horse undoubtedly held a position of importance within Anglo-Saxon culture, and was probably the focus of some ritual activity, as evidenced by the archaeological record, there is no reason to assume the cultic worship of horses occurred in England in the seventh century.[104]

In the early eighth century Bede recounts, in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*,[105] that the leaders of the first Germanic peoples to arrive in post-Roman Britain were two brothers named Hengist and Horsa.[106] Hengist can be translated as gelding or stallion,[107] while Horsa is a form of *hors*, meaning horse.[108] Their legend, thought to have its origins in oral traditions of the fifth and sixth centuries,[109] is retold in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and

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[100] …proprium gentis equorum quoque praesagia ac monitus experiri. publice aluntur isdem nemoribus ac lucis, candidi et nullo mortali opere contacti; quos pressos sacro curru sacerdos ac rex vel princeps civitatis comitantur hinnitusque ac fremitus observant. nec ulli auspicio maior fides, non solum apud plebem, sed apud proceres, apud sacerdotes; se enim ministros deorum, illos conscios putant. (Tacitus, *Germania* 10; Birley, 1999: 42-43)

[101] Seven horse burials are discussed in Wilson, 1992: 101-102; See also: Fern, 2010: 130-135; Cross, 2011: 190-209

[102] Mound 17 at Sutton Hoo contains a seventh-century burial of a young man and the complete remains of a horse, furnished, amongst other items, with a set of horse tack. For a fuller discussion see: Carver, 1992: 369; 1998: 110-13; Larratt Keefer, 1996: 117

[103] Wilson, 1992: 101–103, 137 and 151; Richards, 1992: 131–47, esp. 139

[104] Davidson, 1988: 53; Wilson, 1992: 101-103; Williams, 2001: 207

[105] Bede, *HE* I.15: (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 48-52)

[106] Bede, *HE* I.15: duces fuisse perhibentur eorum primi duo fratres Hengist et Horsa, (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 50-51)

[107] A heroic, Jutish warrior named Hengist is a major character in the *Finnsberg Fragment* of *Beowulf,* but there is no direct link between the *Beowulf* passage and one of the founding brothers mentioned in the *Historia Ecclesiastica.* For further discussion of Hengist in *Beowulf* see: Brooks, 2000: 87-89; Chickering Jr., 2006: 111-113; Vickery, 2009: 141-148; Fern, 2010: 144

[108] Wilson, 1976: 383; Howe, 1990: 49-71; Yorke, 1990: 26-27; 2004; Larratt Keefer, 1996: 116; Fern, 2010: 143

[109] Moisl, 1982: 219-223, 235-6; Brooks, 1989: 58-64; Yorke, 1993; Mitchell and Robinson, 1998: 8-13; Fern, 2010: 143

other later accounts,[110] casting them as semi-divine, heroic descendants of Woden who founded the Kentish royal dynasty.[111] It has been argued that these horse-named warriors, rather than appearing to be actual historical figures, serve as mythical founders, like Rome's legendary Romulus and Remus, as the progenitors of the Anglo-Saxon people.[112] It has also been suggested that their horse-like, yet heroic, qualities may have been the result of the awe and respect held by the Germanic peoples for the Roman cavalry and warhorses.[113] Whatever the details of their symbolic references, the importance of Hengist and Horse, is undeniable as their legend survived for centuries, to be recorded in the later historical accounts and regnal lists.[114] Furthermore, the equine nomenclature of these nation founders strongly indicates that the horse was seen as both a powerful symbol and of central importance to early Anglo-Saxon society.

Regardless of whether there were religious significances to the horse in Anglo-Saxon England, it is apparent that horses played an important role in daily life both as valued possessions and means of transport, and serving to indicate the wealth and prestige of those who could afford to own them.[115] Evidence of riding culture, especially amongst the elites, is seen in the examples of horse accoutrements found in burials,[116] such as the late sixth- or seventh-century horse harness and decorative mounts excavated from the King's Field cemetery in Kent (Fig. 2.37).[117] These five gilt-copper mounts are circular with a central cruciform field which extends into four protrusions, three narrow and one axe-shaped. The different decorative fields are ornamented with interlace and geometric patterns highlighted with gilt and niello. Harnesses such as these and saddles range from

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[110] *ASC*, sub annis 449, 455, 457, 465, 473 (Earle and Plummer, 1892: 12-14)
[111] Turville-Petre, 1957; Brooks, 1989: 55-74; Fern, 2010: 143
[112] Howe, 1990: 49-71; Yorke, 2004; Spence, 2013: 77-78
[113] Birley, 1979: 57-71; Dixon and Southern, 1992: 29; Fern, 2010: 144
[114] Yorke, 1993; Fern, 2010: 143-144
[115] Horses were a luxury item in Anglo-Saxon England, costing a great deal to buy and maintain, while not being used as a working or food animal. For further discussion see: White Jr., 1962: 59-69; Clutton-Brock, 1976: 383; Langdon, 1986: 22; Gladitz, 1997: 78-84, 154-155
[116] Geake, 1997: 101; Carver, 1998: 167; Fern, 2005: 43-64
[117] British Museum, .1243.'70

functional to highly decorated and their use may have been more wide spread than initially thought as some horse equipment seems to have been reused as jewellery preserved in female burials.[118] Furthermore, horses appear to be treated much like treasure in the Anglo-Saxon period, being gifted by a lord to those loyal to him. Such an exchange is found in *Beowulf*, when Hrothgar, out of gratitude to Beowulf, gifts him with eight horses.[119] In an episode designed to show Aidan's humility, Bede recounts that King Oswsine of Northumbria gifted Aiden with a very fine horse and saddle, which the bishop promptly gives away to a beggar. When the king, understandably upset, suggested that something less valuable could have been given away, Aiden took the opportunity to admonish him about humility and the importance of helping his fellow man.[120] This material and literary record has been taken to indicate that horses played a significant but perhaps not common role in Anglo-Saxon England: as treasures and gifts, as means of transport and sport, and as signs of status and luxury.[121]

The role of horses in early Anglo-Saxon warfare has been much discussed, both in terms of the types of horses that would have been used,[122] and the types, if any, of fighting that would have taken place. It has been argued that horses may have been used in warfare to give added advantage against foes on the ground; however the common interpretation of the evidence suggests that horses were ridden as transport to the battle site but that Anglo-Saxons, regardless of rank, preferred to fight on the ground.[123] *The Battle of Maldon* (written *c*. 990-1025 but preserving the well established mores of the Germanic heroic

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[118] Fern, 2005: 46; Dickinson *et al*, 2006: 249-260
[119] *Beowulf*, ll. 1035-1036 (Klaeber, 2008: 36)
[120] Bede, *HE* III.14 (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 257-261)
[121] Richards, 1992: 139; Fern, 2005: 67; Neville, 2006: 140-141; Sawyer, 2013: 97, 103
[122] Larratt Keefer, 1996: 119-131
[123] For discussion in favour of horses used in battle see: Cathers, 2002: 306; Halsall, 2003: 180-181; Fern, 2005: 67; Neville, 2006: 140-141. For alternative arguments in favour of warfare conducted exclusively on foot see: Larratt Keefer, 1996: 121; Cathers, 2002: 288-9, 383

tradition),[124] describes the leader, Byrhtnoth, and his thanes riding to the field of battle, but dismounting prior to engaging the Danes to demonstrate the intention not to flee the conflict before the battle concluded.[125] Horses, in this context, clearly did not play a part in the heroic warrior's engagement in warfare;[126] rather (as demonstrated in the outcome of the poem), they were, or perhaps became, the means by which the coward, as a negative exemplar, was identified, taking his leader's horse and fleeing the battle.[127] Despite the account given in the poem and the record of most major battles as being fought on foot, the associations between warriors and horses is inescapable, appearing repeatedly on contemporary artwork in the form of an armed and mounted warrior fighting an enemy.[128]

The horse motif itself originally had a very similar form in Anglo-Saxon England as it did on the Continent (Fig. 2.38), as can be seen in the late fifth-century brooch from Grave 433 at the cemetery in Buckland, Kent (Fig. 2.39).[129] The brooch, shaped like a resting horse, is cast gilt-copper alloy with chip-carved decorative elements. The horse's head is clearly denoted in the elongated head and curved nose (as opposed to the blunted snout of the boar), as are the rounded, semi-circular eyes, and the long curved neck with decorative accents reminiscent of a mane. The 'incised' lines, suggesting the mane, follow the curve of the back, accenting a large but gently curving body. A teardrop shape highlights the limb joints before narrowing into the bent legs, which terminate in feathery feet. The horse form, as seen here with minimal abstraction, is nevertheless a more shorthand, schematic impression of a horse than a naturalistic rendering. The elements are reduced to the elongated head with curved nose, rounded eyes, and a long neck decorated

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[124] Irving, 1961; Hill, 1970; Woolf, 1976; Murdoch, 1996; Matto, 2002
[125] *Maldon* ll. 23-25 (Scragg, 1981: 57)
[126] Graham-Campbell, 1992: 79
[127] *Maldon* ll 238-240 (Scragg, 1981: 64)
[128] MacCormic, 1981: 1-84; Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle, 1998: 254-258; Mackintosh, 1986; Cathers, 2002: 181, 306; Hawkes, 2002: 344; 2003a: 83; 2006: 107-108. The presence of the armed rider may owe more to Roman imperial iconographic schemes of the Victorious Warrior, which was transmitted throughout the Roman and Germanic world, than any legitimate record Anglo-Saxon battle practices involving horses. For discussion of the mounted warrior motif see below: 127-130
[129] British Museum, 1995,0102.865

to suggest a mane. The body is proportional to the head and visually reads as equine in this context, but without the other signifiers would not necessarily be differentiated from any other quadruped. This kind of horse-shaped ornament appears to have fallen out of favour by the seventh century, although the form of the horse persists on other types of objects.

The shield excavated from Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo (Fig. 2.40),[130] like the helmet briefly discussed above,[131] is considered to be Scandinavian import, or heavily influenced by Scandinavian examples, being an heirloom before being buried in the early seventh century.[132] Nevertheless as with its helmet counterpart, it is assumed that the shield was visible to a wider audience until its burial and so can be discussed in relation to seventh-century iconographic and aesthetic trends. The shield was constructed with a shield board of wood, covered in leather on both sides, to which the decorative elements were directly attached. At the centre of the shield was a large boss, made of gilt copper-alloy iron. Evenly spaced around the flange of the boss are five rivet-heads, attaching it to the shield board, interspersed with interlaced pairs of zoomorphs, generally identified as horses.[133] Flanking the central boss are two zoomorphic mounts, a bird and a dragon, both of which will be discussed in greater detail below.[134] Narrow, diamond-shaped strips of interlace decorated foil and large ornamental bosses are placed above and below the central boss.[135] The metal rim of the shield is decorated with twelve evenly spaced cast animal heads, facing inwards, and interspersed with rectangles of gold stamped foil. The animal heads and foil are attached to the rim by fluted clips and rivets. On the back of the shield and set

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[130] British Museum, 1939,1010.94
[131] See above 71-72
[132] Lindqvist, 1948: 137; Bruce-Mitford, 1949: 71; 1974: 92; 1978: 48-49
[133] Bruce-Mitford, 1978: 520-521; Speake, 1980: 32; Richards, 1992: 141; Hicks, 1993a: 66
[134] For discussion of the predatory bird mounts see below: 81-84. For discussion of the dragon mount see below: 108-112.
[135] Evans, 1986: 49; Coatsworth and Pinder, 2002: 109–114

off-centre is an iron strip, highly decorated with gilt copper-alloy and zoomorphic protrusions and terminals, that forms the handgrip.

The horses on the flange of the central boss are separated by the rivets into five pairs (Fig. 2.41), both confronting and addorsed, which are interlaced with their neighbours. Each outermost partner of the addorsed pair, entwined by their bodies, faces the interspersed rivet heads while the confronting pair, linked by tangled legs, forms the centre of the panel; it is an arrangement deemed by Hicks to have an unfinished feeling.[136] The 'horses' are quadrupeds with long faces and open jaws (Fig. 2.42), prominent, round eyes, and a long curved neck dominated by a mane-like, textured design that terminates at the shoulder. The body is elongated to allow for the interlacing with its partner. The legs are highlighted at the joint by a horseshoe-shaped decorative detail, and bent, as seen on the brooch previously discussed, as though kneeling or lying down. They terminate in a feathery paw, which has been called "standard leafy Style-II form",[137] but may also be intended to recall the shape of a hoof. Although these shield boss flange animals are more abstracted, there are indicators: the long equine face, round eyes, elongated neck and mane, which allow for recognition and therefore the common interpretation of them as horses.

The influence of the shield's decoration on seventh-century artwork can be seen directly in the decorative plaques of the purse-lid (Fig. 2.43),[138] also found in Mound 1, but of a production contemporary with the burial. The purse-lid would have originally been made of whalebone or ivory, which was set with ornate garnet and millefiori cloisonné and attached by gold hinges to a leather purse filled with thirty-seven coins (Fig. 2.44),[139] three blanks, and two small ingots.[140] A kidney-shaped border of cloisonné

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[136] Hicks, 1993a: 66-67
[137] Hicks, 1993a: 67
[138] British Museum, 1939,1010.2
[139] British Museum, 1939,1010.3

surrounds the lid, enclosing the cloisonné plaques, which form both geometric and zoomorphic decoration.[141] One of the plaques of garnet set in gold depicts four entwined quadrupeds that seem to deliberately reference the horses on the shield (Fig. 2.45). The purse-lid versions are more abstracted but mirror, albeit in reversed form, the positioning, confronting and addorsed, and the connection, interlaced at the body and the limbs, of the beasts on the boss. The 'horses' still display the long face with rounded eyes, although the open jaws and limbs have become exaggerated to interlace, ribbon like, with the limbs and jaws of the paired beast. The limbs, highlighted by a teardrop-shaped joint, are similarly exaggerated into an interlace pattern but terminate in a recognisable, if abbreviated, feathery paw. The neck is elongated and curved with small cloisonné cells forming a decorative detail that suggests a mane, but is extended all along the back of the creature, making its designation less clear. Abstracted as they are, the identification of these quadrupedal zoomorphs as horses can be challenged, yet they do consciously reference, in both form and design, the shield boss animals which more readily appear as horses.[142]

Continued abstraction of the horse form might be seen in the beast found in the corner of a densely decorated cheek-piece recovered as part of the Staffordshire hoard (Fig. 2.46).[143] This rounded, triangular, silver-gilt plate has four distinct fields of interlaced zoomorphs, each contained by a border decorated with a chased zigzag pattern.[144] The smallest field contains a crouching quadruped with an elongated neck. The beast's 'head' with a rounded eye is also extended with what might be rounded snout or

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[140] Bruce-Mitford, 1978: 487–522; Evans, 1986: 87–88; Webster, 2012: 120-122. The contents of the purse was a deliberate selection of Frankish coins, each from a different mint, illustrating the exoticism associated with coinage in Anglo-Saxon England at this time, see Chapter 1, 41-45. See further: Bruce-Mitford, 1975: 578–677

[141] For further discussion of the man-between-beasts motif, see below: 126-127. For further discussion of the birds, see below: 87-88.

[142] Bruce-Mitford, 1978: 520-521; Speake, 1980: 32; Richards, 1992: 141; Hicks, 1993a: 66

[143] BMAG, 2010.0138K0453

[144] The so-called cheek-piece, or K453, is identified as such due to the similarity of shape with known helmet cheek-pieces; however as it is much smaller than a functional cheek-piece might be expected to be, this is a point of some dispute. For the current discussion see: http://www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk/k453 (accessed 26 June 2014)

open jaws, but might also be interpreted as a curved beak. The beast's limbs are delineated by a teardrop shaped joint and bend beneath its body before terminating in feathery paws. The pose is strongly reminiscent of the seemingly traditional mode of representation of the horse motif both in Anglo-Saxon England (Fig. 2.39),[145] and the wider Germanic world on the Continent (Fig. 2.47);[146] indeed it appears to be a more faithful representation of the motif than either the shield boss or purse lid 'horses'. However the extension of the neck to an uncomfortable proportion, the abstraction of the curved jaws that appear almost beak-like, and the lack of any indication of a mane make identification of the quadruped on the Staffordshire hoard cheek-piece as a horse extremely debatable.

In addition to these examples of the full-body horse motif, seen in profile, a horse head in isolation, seen from above, was often a decorative element on a number of brooches found in grave-sites of the sixth century.[147] Animal headed brooch terminals were a common decorative flourish on continental Germanic examples (Fig. 2.48),[148] although the horse head seems to have been preferred in Anglo-Saxon art.[149] Often found decorating the long end of a cruciform brooch, in counterpoint to geometric or animal interlace ornamenting the shorter, more ornate, "cruciform" end,[150] the horse head is recognisable by means of a different set of signifiers. It is typified by an elongated head, or face, with round eyes at the top, where it connects to rest of the brooch, and more prominent rounded, flaring nostrils at the other end; these can often be exaggerated with spiralling protrusions which have been interpreted as the breath of the horse.[151] The

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[145] British Museum, 1995,0102.865
[146] Römisch-Germanisches Museum, Köln, D575 a-b
[147] Laing and Laing, 1998: 22-24; Owen-Crocker, 2004: 39-40; Pollington, 2008: 60
[148] British Museum, 1868,1228.482
[149] For a sample of brooches bearing the distinctive horse head terminals see: Cramp and Miket, 1982; Webster and Backhouse, 1991; Hirst and Clark, 2009
[150] Smith, 1923: 25-27; Richards, 1992: 139; Laing and Laing, 1998: 30; Owen-Crocker, 2004: 39
[151] Smith, 1923: 27; Pollington, 2008: 60; Carver *et al*, 2009: 256; Fern, 2010: 138

horse's head can be seen, rendered very simply, on the foot of a sixth-century copper-alloy

cruciform brooch (Fig. 2.49),[152] excavated from Grave 2 at Howletts, Kent. A more

abstracted version, with spiral flourishes instead of nostrils, can be seen on the foot of

another sixth-century copper-alloy brooch (Fig. 2.50),[153] from Grave 20 at the cemetery of

Great Chesterford in Essex. This type of brooch ornament, common in the fifth and sixth

century, does not survive into the seventh century.

Two silver-gilt terminals, both thought to be part of a helmet, have been found as

part of the Staffordshire hoard and identified as horse heads.[154] If they are, in fact,

depictions of horse heads they would represent a development of the motif into the seventh

century, and thereby be illustrative of the Anglo-Saxon tradition of using horse heads to

ornament larger decorative programs. One of these terminals has very simple

ornamentation and a very simple shape (Fig. 2.51).[155] Elongated and tapering gently from

a wider top to a narrower, rounded bottom, the head is bisected by a band of horizontal

grooves about halfway down. A similar band is found behind the head, separating it from

the rest of the terminal. The upper half of the head is further divided, vertically, by a band

which splits into a Y-shape behind the small oval eyes. The lower half, or snout, is

decorated by two vertical lines of small rings on top and slightly open jaws on the sides.

The other terminal displays similar, although more ornate, decoration (Fig. 2.52),[156]

especially around the eyes, which are larger and more rounded. Although those currently

researching the Staffordshire hoard seem confident that these two terminals do represent

horses, it is difficult to understand why. The signifiers that typified the traditional mode of

horse head representation, as seen on the earlier cruciform brooches, are absent in the

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[152] British Museum, 1936,0511.13
[153] British Museum, 1964,0702.98
[154] For discussion of the identification of these terminals as 'horse head' terminals see:
http://www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk/video/staffordshire-hoard-blog-new-horse-head-terminal (Accessed 26 June 2014)
[155] Staffordshire Hoard, K678
[156] Staffordshire Hoard

terminals. Nor are there any particularly horse-like attributes, which might be argued to be artistic innovations, visible. In fact, close examination of the mouth, which seems to be bordered with a jagged line, suggesting sharp teeth, would seem to suggest a categorically un-horse-like trait; rather, the terminals appear to be generically zoomorphic.

The contemporary scholarly desire to identify representations of horses is understandable, given the significance and importance of the animal in Anglo-Saxon society. As noted, horses were valuable commodities, becoming high status gifts and were granted, if *Beowulf* is to be believed, to only the most impressive warriors.[157] They were symbols of elite status and wealth, as owning and maintaining a horse was a costly endeavour, and were often equipped with jewelled and decorated accoutrements to further signify their owner's status.[158] It has been suggested that their use in warfare possibly gave them connotations of battle prowess and domination, much as a mounted warrior would dominate a battlefield.[159] However, the doubtful evidence for their use in battle renders this at least debatable. Regardless of such considerations, the power and importance of the horse to Anglo-Saxon society is clear. Additionally the animal itself would present a rather imposing picture of a large, powerful, dominant beast with speed and prowess that would be enviable in a warrior.

The clarity of the representation of a horse in the seventh century is, however, debatable, rendering its identification problematic. The key signifiers demonstrated in the earlier, and arguably clearer, Anglo-Saxon representations of a horse, both as a full bodied motif as well as a truncated head, become increasingly opaque in the seventh century as this type of zoomorph becomes more abstracted. The representation of a horse motif on metalwork was a Germanic tradition that seems to have fallen victim to its own artistic

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[157] *Beowulf* ll. 1035-1036 (Klaeber, 2008: 36)
[158] Geake, 1997: 101; Hedeager, 2000: 45, 50-51; Fern, 2005: 44
[159] Bacharach, 1985; Hooper, 1993; Halsall, 2003: 180-188; Fern, 2005: 67

abstraction. If the horse remains distinct and recognisable as a horse, as opposed to any other quadruped, in the seventh century it is due to the familiarity of the traditional modes of representation, as a kneeling horse in profile with head extended downwards or as horse head seen from above, rather than any adherence to distinguishing signifiers. In such a manner, recognition becomes more fluid and less confident and the value of the horse's qualities, as represented, perhaps less potent for both viewer and bearer.

2.3d The Bird

The traditional way of representing a bird in Anglo-Saxon art is almost always in the form of a predatory bird, indicated by a curved beak and often, but not always, shown with talons.[160] As noted, this form of the motif is found throughout continental Germanic art of the migration period (Fig. 2.53),[161] on multiple types of objects, suggesting that it was both a popular and a potent decorative choice that proliferated amongst Germanic cultures. That is not to say that all birds represented in Anglo-Saxon art were predatory, but non-predatory birds were very rare. A small sixth-century gilt-silver brooch found in Grave 40 at Chessel Down on the Isle of Wight (Fig. 2.54)[162] provides one example of a non-predatory bird, with a pointed beak, oval body, and triangular tail. The simplicity of the form of this bird highlights the key difference between representations of non-predatory birds, and the more ubiquitous predatory variety: a straight, rather than curved, beak. Further examples of non-predatory birds are preserved on another brooch excavated from Chessel Down,[163] a brooch found in Fairford, Gloucestershire,[164] and seen from above on a

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[160] Speake, 1980: 81-85; Hicks, 1986: 153-158; for examples of the predatory bird motif in early Anglo-Saxon artwork see: Youngs, 1989; Webster and Backhouse, 1991
[161] Römisch-Germanisches Museum, Köln, D 395 D 402-403
[162] British Museum, 1867,0729.36
[163] Excavated from Grave 3. See Arnold, 1982: Fig. 4; Hicks, 1986: 159
[164] Speake, 1980: 49, Fig. 17b; Hicks, 1986: 160

possible shield mount from Ashwell, Hertfordshire.[165] However the most recognizable

example of a non-predatory bird dated to the seventh century forms part of the predator-

and-prey motif on the pair of cloisonné plaques from the Sutton Hoo purse-lid (Fig. 2.55),

which display a straight, blunted beak in direct contrast to the curved beak of the predator

above it.[166]

The more familiar predatory bird form appears on a range of objects, including

mounts, brooches, buckles, helmets, pendants, and decorative foils. It is overwhelmingly

presented in profile, with the head, dominated by a round eye and the curving beak,

distinguished from the body with a decorative flourish, wings folded back along the side of

the body, talons outstretched and tail fanned. This traditional predatory bird form can be

seen portrayed simply, in a schematic form, in a late sixth- or early seventh-century

copper-alloy shield mount excavated from a grave at St Stephen's, Kent (Fig. 2.56).[167]

The bird's head, gilded to highlight it, is dominated by a round eye, which sits at the centre

of a larger circle, forming the head, with a long, sharp beak curving downward. The wing

and leg joints, also gilded, form opposing teardrop shapes, which taper to form a

horseshoe-shaped talon at the front of the body, and a wing-tip at the back. The tail forms

a pelta shape at the base of the mount. A similar motif, although much more extravagantly

ornamented, is found in the bird-shaped mount placed on the Sutton Hoo shield in the sixth

century (Fig. 2.57).[168] Like the St Stephen's mount, it is shown in profile, with its sharply

taloned claw extending in front of the body, wings tucked back, and tail fanned out behind.

The cast copper-alloy head is gilded and set with garnets at the eye and along the comma-

shaped bracket,[169] which separates the head from the body of the bird, a common

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[165] Kennett, 1974: Fig. 5e; Hicks, 1986: 160
[166] For a discussion of the predator-and-prey motif in Anglo-Saxon art see below: 90-92
[167] British Museum, 1928,0606.1
[168] British Museum 1939,1010.94.C. Bruce-Mitford, 1978: 1–129; Evans, 1986: 49–55, 111–119
[169] Bruce-Mitford, 1978: 61-62

convention still often identified as 'helmet style', a sub-group of Salin's Style I.[170] A beak curves dramatically into a spiral, ending at sharp point, in an exaggerated version of the traditional curved predatory beak found on most Germanic bird images. The leg, also of cast copper-alloy and gilded,[171] is highlighted by a teardrop joint set with cloisonné garnets which hide, or conversely reveal, a human mask,[172] and tapers to a bent leg ending in large and outstretched claws with gilded talons, exaggerated like the beak, to extend and curve in upon themselves. The body is made of gold foil, with the wing indicated by a spiral at the joint and folded back along the body filled with a series of lightly incised 'winged heads'.[173] The tail, also filled with incised decoration forms the base of the mount, fanning out into a bifurcated shape, possibly reminiscent of a fish's tail.

A further example of this motif, illustrating both the similarities of the schematic mode of depiction and the variations possible within that scheme can be seen a seventh-century copper-alloy mount found in Essex (Fig. 2.58).[174] This shows two confronting, full-length birds of prey presenting mirror images, slightly asymmetrical, of each other. The heads are raised and unpatterned, differentiating them from hatch-marked bodies, and dominated by a large round eye and curved beak. This iteration of the predatory bird's head bears an eye that is more prominent than that of the Sutton Hoo mount but less overwhelming than that from St Stephen's, and a beak whose curve is less exaggerated than the former but more extreme than the latter. The bodies also share decorative elements with these mounts, bearing the teardrop shaped leg-joint leading to extended curved talons; the form of the folded back wing is, however, closer to that from St Stephen's, while the fanned forked tail feathers recall those of the Sutton Hoo mount. A

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[170] See discussion of styles above: Chapter 1: 12-16. Here the shape of the element, a comma, will be used to describe the creatures, rather than the interpretative 'helmet' of Kendrick's sub-section of Style 1.
[171] Bruce-Mitford, 1978: 60-61
[172] Wickham-Crowley, 1992: 45-50
[173] Wickham-Crowley, 1992: 45-50
[174] PAS, CAM-5BC2F1

slightly different version of a predatory bird, which still bears the key signifiers that identify it as such, can be seen in a pair of bird-shaped, seventh-century fibulae (Fig. 2.59).[175] Although composed entirely of garnet cloisonné, the birds display the round eyes and a curved beak on a head separated from the rest of the body by a comma-shaped element, while the wing folds along the back, differentiated from the rest of the body by the shape of the cells, above horseshoe-shaped talons, before the brooch terminates in a wedge-shaped fanned tail.

A much more rare bird motif, depicted full-length, seen as if from above, can be seen on the face-mask of the Sutton Hoo helmet (Fig. 2.60). Here, the head of the bird bears two round garnets, for eyes, at the top of the head while the pronounced beak meets the serpentine crest of the helmet at the forehead. The distinctive pose of the bird makes the specific shape of the beak, curved or blunt, difficult to distinguish; however given the context of its setting and the other signifiers of the form, the bird is likely predatory. The wings are outstretched, forming the eyebrows, inlaid with silver wire and set with cloisonné garnets along the lower edge, terminating in the boars' heads already discussed. The body of the bird forms the nose of the face and the semi-circular fan of the tail becomes a moustache.[176] A parallel, with wings tucked back, can be found in a silver-gilt copper-alloy fibula in the shape of a bird seen from above (Fig. 2.61),[177] found near Uppåkra, Sweden and likely dated to the sixth or seventh century. Although the helmet may have emerged from a Scandinavian context, this variation maintains many of the same characteristics that can be seen in the profile-type bird: round eyes, pronounced beak, fanned tail, and wings, highlighted at the joint, extending back to rest against the body.

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[175] Ashmolean Museum
[176] The multivalency and shifting interpretations of the face-mask will be discussed in more detail below: 120-121
[177] Lunds Universitets Historiska Museum

Apart from such examples of full-length birds, the motif of an isolated predatory bird-head bearing the same large round eyes and curved beaks typical of its full-length counterpart is extremely common in early Anglo-Saxon art. They are often worked into larger patterns of zoomorphs or used as decorative flourishes on terminals. A simple, isolated bird head can be seen on the gilt copper-alloy drinking terminal excavated from the barrow at Taplow in Buckinghamshire (Fig. 2.62).[178] Dated to the late-sixth or seventh century the bird head on the terminal is both abstracted and schematic, but remains clearly recognizable as a bird of prey. The head has a roughly square shape and is separated from the rest of the terminal by an extremely angular version of the comma-shape seen in the full-length mounts discussed above. The round eye is placed in the centre of the head and set with a garnet. The beak takes on the extreme curve displayed in the Sutton Hoo mount, forming a spiral but terminating in a sharp point at the centre. Little attention is given to making the component parts look at all naturalistic or bird-like but the combination inevitably can and should be read as a predatory bird.

Confronting bird heads can be seen on both a seventh-century, gilt copper-alloy buckle (Fig. 2.63)[179] and a set of late sixth- or seventh-century gold miniature buckles found at King's Field in Kent (Fig. 2.64),[180] representing the prevalence of the motif on both lower and higher status objects. On both buckles, although with varying levels of clarity, the heads are bordered by the familiar comma-shape set just behind a round eye. The beak protrudes from the opposite side, curving downwards before spiralling back up to end in a point. Confronting bird heads, incorporated with interlace, are also found on a seventh-century pressblech die found in North Yorkshire, which was used to make decorated foils. The heads again bear the large eye, less rounded in this case, and the

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[178] British Museum, 1883,1214.21
[179] PAS, NMS-816A96
[180] British Museum, .1094.a.'70

prominent beak curving to a point. They are incorporated into a larger zoomorphic

interlace pattern, but separated by the comma-like shape made by the coils of interlace.

A trio of bird heads surround a ring on a seventh-century gold disc pendant, also

from King's Field in Kent (Fig. 2.65).[181] This is made of a circular sheet of gold decorated

with a base of intricate patterns of gold filigree; it is this which provides a dynamic

decorative background for the jewelled garnet cloisonné decoration which takes the form

of the three highly stylized bird heads set around a central cloisonné ring that originally

held a jewel (perhaps another garnet) or contrasting material. The specific form of the bird

heads differs from the types examined thus far, probably due to the limitations of the

materials; however the key aspects that typify the Anglo-Saxon depiction of predatory bird

heads are present and recognizable. The large round garnet eye physically separates the

beak from the rest of the head or neck. The beak curves down to a point but lacks the

familiar exaggerated spiral. Depending on how a viewer chooses to read the image, the

bird head is separated from the rest of the bird by either the back of the round eye, or the

edges of the cloisonné cell immediately behind the eye. The bird heads seen on the

pendant are strongly reminiscent of the bird head of the St Stephen's mount (Fig. 2.66).

Despite the differences in specific shape, material, and abstraction, representations of

predatory birds, be they as full-length depictions or truncated heads, are instantly

recognizable and easily categorized as a not insignificant portion of the decorative

iconography of seventh-century Anglo-Saxon metalwork.

Imagery of predatory birds can also be found, as on the Sutton Hoo purse lid, in the

iconographic motif of a predator and its prey. This predator-and-prey trope was

widespread classical motif, predation being seen as a symbol of personal and political

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[181] British Museum, .1145.'70. Webster and Backhouse, 1991: 26, cat. 9

power,[182] and was common throughout the Roman world, including Britannia, as illustrated by the recent find of a funerary sculpture in London (Fig. 2.67),[183] dated to the first or second century CE, of an eagle eating a snake. Predation by birds was certainly part of the iconography of the Germanic world, as demonstrated by a seventh-century Merovingian Chatelaine plate which represents a thin fish flanked by two predatory birds, being pecked by their sharp beaks (Fig. 2.68).[184]

Given the widespread nature of this motif in the early medieval period, it is unsurprising that it formed part of the Anglo-Saxon artistic repertoire, as it draws from both artistic traditions.[185] A gold plate mount excavated as part of the Staffordshire hoard can be seen as representational of this motif type (Fig. 2.69).[186] Although crumpled, enough detail is visible to see that the mount displays two exquisitely rendered, confronting predatory birds, displaying all the key signifiers, grip a similarly detailed fish between them. The motif is seen repeated in lesser status materials in a gilt copper-alloy openwork mount found in Norfolk and dated to the late-sixth or seventh century (Fig. 2.70).[187] The decorative program of a gilt copper-alloy, radiate-headed brooch, now in the British Museum, can also be interpreted as an abstracted, symbolic interpretation of the predatory bird-and-fish motif (Fig. 2.71).[188] The brooch, found in Grave 266 at Buckland in Kent, and dated anywhere from the late-fifth to the seventh century, is decorated with schematic predatory bird heads, little more than large round garnet eyes with curved beaks, along the head-plate. In the centre of the foot-plate is the simply drawn body of a fish

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[182] Wheye and Kennedy, 2008: 23, 44-45. A predatory bird and its prey can be seen on a Greek coin produced around 412-411 BCE, found near Arkagas, Sicily.
[183] Museum of London, MOLA, 2013 (http://www.mola.org.uk/blog/pristine-roman-sculpture-discovered-mola) Date Accessed 17 October 2014
[184] British Museum, 1891,10-19,59
[185] Hicks, 1986: 160-162; Dickinson, 2005: 134-135
[186] BMAG, 2010.0138K0652
[187] PAS, NMS-7B86F1
[188] British Museum, 1995,0102.302

being flanked, and apparently pecked at, by two further bird heads protruding from the sides.

Birds are also pictured preying on serpents, as can be seen in the sixth- or very early seventh-century copper-alloy mount found near Bedford (Fig. 2.72).[189] On the mount, the bird clutches an interlacing snake it its talons and leans down to bite or peck it. The snake, the bird's beak, the band behind its head, its leg and wing are all highlighted with gilt for emphasis. Finally, and arguably most well known amongst these types of predator-and-prey motifs from seventh-century Anglo-Saxon England, are the two bird plaques from the purse-lid found at Sutton Hoo. Both plaques bear the same imagery, a smaller bird below, being gripped at the neck by a larger bird above, in garnet and millefiori cloisonné. The bodies of the two birds are similar; however a few key differences, apart from their placement within the scene, distinguish the predator from its prey. The smaller bird, clearly the prey, has a smaller head with a straight, blunted beak and a narrow neck that curves down to the rest of the body, while the feet are horseshoe shaped, a variation found on some representations of predatory birds, but in this case differentiated from the three-clawed talon of its attacker. The tail differs as well, terminating with a rounded, semi-circular end in contrast to the rectangular tail of the predatory bird above it. The predatory bird, as might be expected, has the dramatically curved and pointed beak as well as the comma-shaped border at the back of its head. The predatory bird appears to be hunched over its smaller victim, gripping it about the throat and pecking its head.[190]

Clearly, the predatory bird could be utilized with numerous types of prey in order to convey different interpretations and significances. These motifs might be attempts to represent observed scenes of predation in nature, highlighting the fierce, powerful and

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[189] PAS, WMID-E4F0C5
[190] Hicks, 1986: 159

victorious qualities of the bird. They have been interpreted as symbolic statements of religious dominance literally placing a pagan symbol in competition with a Christian one,[191] and have also been considered emblematic of the elite sport of falconry, a longstanding tradition in the early medieval world.[192] Regardless of the symbolic meaning of the scene itself, the consistency, which is not to say uniformity, of representation of the Anglo-Saxon predatory bird is telling.

The ubiquity and immediacy of identification of the predatory bird motif suggests, to contemporary scholars, that the bird, specifically the predatory bird, held a place of potency and importance in Anglo-Saxon cultures. Birds have a supernatural or spiritual presence in many religions and societies, and the Germanic use of birds in art has, for example, been connected to Odin; alternatively they might simply have been seen as living emblems of another world, set apart from the world of men.[193] The bird mount (Fig. 2.73) on the Sutton Hoo shield, in particular, has been attributed a specifically close connection to Odin given the human face (Fig. 2.74) 'hidden' within the hip joint; Wickham-Crowley has argued that this, along with the 'winged heads' may well reference the account of Odin transforming into an eagle.[194] More generally, the pervasiveness of bird imagery in Anglo-Saxon art has been explained as evidence of a strong link to Odin, associated with battles and death but also with protection and metamorphosis.[195]

With this in mind, it is perhaps worth turning to reconsider the contexts of display. As has often been noted, whether the predatory birds are depicted as stylized or more naturalistic they are not uncommon in the decoration of military equipment, ideal sites for potent and protective symbols. However, despite the birds being aggressive in nature and

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[191] Wittkower, 1938: 317; Werner, 1952: 57-58; Hicks, 1986: 160; Dickinson, 2005: 159; Wheye and Kennedy, 2008: 45
[192] Hicks, 1986: 162-169; 1993: 26-29, 69-70; Klingender, 1971: 112; Wickham-Crowley, 1992: 53; Hawkes, 1997: 320
[193] Wickham-Crowley, 1992: 45; Shepherd, 1998: 89
[194] Wickham-Crowley, 1992: 49
[195] Wickham-Crowley, 1992: 48-49; Gräslund, 2006: 127-128

fierce-looking, they seem to be limited to protective gear, like helmets and shields, rather than weaponry.[196] This suggests that predatory birds might have been perceived as having had a strong apotropaic function in early Anglo-Saxon society and were utilized wherever added defence was deemed necessary.[197] Whether there was a link between Odin and birds, as is tempting to assume, the apotropaic power of the bird as a protective emblem in its own right strongly suggests that the decorative programs for these objects were being chosen deliberately to act as amulets or talismans, to provide that protective element against harm, evil, defeat, and even death.[198]

However, even accepting this postulation, it is unnecessary to draw a specific connection between predatory birds and Odin to explain why the image of a bird might have featured so commonly. As Carola Hicks has pointed out, falconry was known and likely practiced by the Anglo-Saxon elite, ensuring that many Anglo-Saxons would have had first-hand knowledge; they would have known the power of these birds, both in flight and in pursuit of prey. Their common appearance on high status objects may thus have meant they functioned as signifiers of status and wealth.[199] Alternatively, they could simply have been seen as living emblems of another world, capable of flight, inhabiting the air, and therefore somehow beyond the understanding of mankind.

Here it is important to remember that the method for representing a predatory bird in Anglo-Saxon art was to include the key signifiers: curved beak, large eye, sharp talons, folded back wings and fanned tail, however stylised these might be.[200] The repeated use of these iconographic elements made the bird consistently recognisable. The various versions thereby retained a similarity to the motif in general and the tradition that dictated their mode of representation. This meant that, although the imagery was not uniform, it was,

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[196] Speake, 1980: fig. 17; Evans, 1986: pl. III; Hawkes, 1997: 319
[197] Hawkes, 1997: 319-320; Webster, 2003: 18
[198] Klingender, 1971: 103-112; Speake, 1980: 81-85; Wickham-Crowley, 1992: 42-53; Hawkes, 1997: 319
[199] Hicks, 1993a: 70
[200] Speake, 1980: 81; Hicks, 1986: 153-158; Hawkes, 1997: 317

with few exceptions, nearly impossible to distinguish a specific type of bird from any given representation. There are rarely any identifying features such as coloration, feather types, or wing profiles on these generic Anglo-Saxon birds which could be used to suggest eagle rather than buzzard, falcon, or hawk. In fact, the way these creatures were made recognisable – as birds – was by means of just a few salient features. This implies that it was the key features that held some significance as definitive of the nature of the beast, and perhaps also indicated that the type or species of bird was not the focus of attention.

That is not to say that different types of birds were not known to the Anglo-Saxons, nor that they did not distinguish one type of bird from another in other contexts. As Eric Lacey has recently demonstrated, Old English contains a multitude of words used to describe birds, differentiated by where and when they are found,[201] the sounds that they make,[202] and their appearance.[203] In the later Old English literature they proliferate, distinct from one another in appearance, behaviour and purpose.[204] For example, sea birds keep the protagonist company in *The Wanderer*;[205] a raven appears to croak its warning in *Beowulf*;[206] and flocks of birds 'sing' to *The Seafarer*:

> Sometimes I would take the song of the swan
> as my entertainment,
> the cry of the gannet
> and the call of the curlew
> in place of human laughter,
> the sea-mew's singing
> in place of the mead-drinking.
> There storms would pound the rocky cliffs
> whilst the tern, icy-winged,
> answered them;
> very often the sea-eagle would screech,

[201] Sorrell, 1994: 37-39
[202] For discussion of this see: Poole and Lacey, 2014; Lacey, forthcoming (b)
[203] See: Lacey, forthcoming (a)
[204] For a comprehensive analysis of birds in Old English language and literature see: Lacey, 2013.
[205] *Wanderer*, l. 47: baþian brimfuglas, brædan feþra (Marsden, 2004: 331); sea birds swim,spread their feathers (Bradley, 1982: 323)
[206] *Beowulf*, ll. 1801-1802: oþþæt hrefn blaca heofones wynne bliðheort bodode. ða com beorht scacan (Klaeber, 2008: 61); Until the black raven with raucous glee announced heaven's joy, and a hurry of brightness overran the shadows (Heaney, 1999: 58)

wings dappled with spray.[207]

The eagle and the raven, differentiated by descriptions of their function, also have roles as the 'Beasts of Battle' who, along with the wolf, are harbingers of violent battle and death.[208] Finally, knowledge of the differences between types of birds is necessary to solve Riddle 7 in the Exeter book:

> My clothing is silent when I tread the earth or occupy my
> lodgings or stir the water. Sometimes my trappings and this lofty
> air raise me up over the dwellings of men and then the strength
> of the clouds bears me wide over the people. My adornments
> resound loudly and make melody, sing clearly, when I am not in
> contact with water or land - a travelling guest.[209]

The answer, following from a familiarity with the customs and habits of specific birds, rather than any visual clues, is a swan.

Nonetheless, while it appears to have been customary and necessary to distinguish birds from one another in the literature, the <u>visual</u> representations were intentionally consistent, if not uniform, in their form. Depictions of predatory birds all carry the same significant characteristics, regardless of the purpose of the object they adorn or the completeness of their body. To reiterate, an Anglo-Saxon portrayal of a bird must have a large round eye, a prominent beak, usually curved like that of a predator, being only very rarely blunted and, if the depiction is full bodied, they display talons.[210] A wide range of artistic license can be taken with the actual depiction, leading to considerable stylisation, but the significant components always remain identifiable. This suggests that it was the

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[207] *Seafarer*, ll. 19b-25: Hwilum ylfete song dyde ic me to gomene, ganotes hleoþor ond huilpan sweg fore hleahtor wera, mæw singende fore medodrince. Stormas þær stanclifu beotan, þær him stearn oncwæð, isigfeþera; ful oft þæt earn bigeal, urigfeþra (Marsden, 2004: 224; Bradley, 1982: 334)

[208] Honegger, 1998: 289-298; Alexander, 2002: 131; Fulk and Cain, 2002: 32; Niles, 2007: 127-128; Lacey, forthcoming (b)

[209] Hrægl min swigað, þōn ic hrusan trede, oþþe þa wic buge, oþþe wado drefe. Hwilum mec ahebbað ofer hæleþa byht hyrste mine, ond þeos hea lyft, ond mec þōn wide, wolcna strengu ofer folc byreð. Frætwe mine swogað hlude swinsiað, torhte singað, þōnne ic getenge ne beom flode ond foldan, ferende gæst. (Sorrell, 1994: 47)

[210] Speake, 1980: 81; Hicks, 1986: 153-158; Hawkes, 1997: 317

behaviours or traits indicated by these features which were regarded as being of primary significance – as admirable, desirable, powerful, and predatory – rather than a desire to depict specific species.

2.3e The Serpent

The serpent, or snake, can sometimes present a challenge to identify in Anglo-Saxon art, not because its form is complicated but rather the opposite, because it is so simple (Fig. 2.75),[211] being defined by the absence of limbs. It has a head, often with beak-like jaws gaping open or biting down on a body, either its own or a neighbour's, and a sinuous body. The lack of limbs is so integral to the Anglo-Saxon consciousness that in the late Old English poem *Genesis A*,[212] the serpent who tempted Adam and Eve is punished by God to travel without feet,[213] or rather to move without visible means of mobility.[214] The serpentine quality of the snake's form might seem to be a decorative benefit when creating the complex interlace and dense patterns typical of Anglo-Saxon art, but by the seventh century the so-called Style II ornament was well established and almost any zoomorph could be abstracted, elongated, and twisted to form the ribbon-like decorations. This potential similarity of form between serpents and elongated zoomorphs is what makes identification of a serpent particularly challenging as the zoomorphs limbs' can be very difficult to spot amongst minute and complicated interlace. However, since the decorative function of interlace can be achieved, in theory, with any type of zoomorph, the choice to depict a serpent (without the distinctive hip joints and legs) rather than another must be deliberate.

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[211] Staffordshire Hoard, K128
[212] Genesis A, Oxford, Bodlian, Junius 11
[213] 'faran feðeleas', see Sorrell, 1994: 50
[214] Sorrell, 1994: 49-50

Four intertwining filigree serpents can be seen on the face of a gold pommel cap found as part of the Staffordshire hoard (Fig. 2.76).[215] The two snakes to the left have clearly defined heads that narrow to a rounded point with two collared gold granules for eyes. The two snakes on the right are more loosely drawn, in profile, with smaller heads outlined in beaded wire and larger round eyes. Despite this disparity in head shape, the bodies of all four snakes are comparable and interlace amongst each other to form a balanced but asymmetrical decorated field. Four snakes also fill the decorative space of a copper-alloy, tongue-shaped, seventh-century mount found near Coberley, Gloucestershire (Fig. 2.77).[216] The snakes, two facing each direction, are accented with gilt inlaid in transverse grooves along their bodies, set against a gilded ground. The snake-heads are depicted in profile with round eyes and open V-shaped, beak-like jaws, one of which has a tongue protruding from its mouth. As with the Staffordshire Hoard pommel cap, the interlacing of the snakes creates an asymmetrical rhythmic pattern.

Snakes were also depicted as double-headed creatures, with a serpentine head at either end of a straight or curved body, but rarely with any interlacing. An example of a cast copper-alloy, double-headed serpent can be seen along the crest of the Sutton Hoo helmet (Fig. 2.78). This has two terminals shaped like serpent heads seen from above with inset garnet eyes and bared sharp teeth visible from the side. The terminal at the forehead confronts the head of the bird on the face-mask. The terminal at the back of the head is placed at a point of vulnerability to attack, from behind, and might have been intended to provide apotropaic enhancement to the helmet.[217] A similar type of serpentine crest can be seen on a contemporary Vendel-era helmet from Sweden (Fig. 2.79),[218] although the form of the snake is significantly different from the Sutton Hoo helmet crest. A double-headed

[215] Staffordshire Hoard, K457
[216] PAS, GLO-878818
[217] Williams, 2011:107-109; Price and Mortimer, 2011: 521
[218] Historiska museet, Stockholm

serpent can also be seen on the face of a tongue-shaped buckle found in Grave 19 at Eccles, Kent (Fig. 2.80).[219] The cast copper-alloy appliqué divides the buckle in half vertically, with both serpent heads again depicted as if viewed from above, one biting the crossbar and the other the decorative edging at the opposite side. The Eccles double-headed serpent is flanked by two interlacing snakes with open, beak-like jaws, incised onto the plate of the buckle and the field of the buckle is further contained by another double-headed serpent arranged in a U-shape around the piece.

Serpents, despite their ubiquitous presence in Anglo-Saxon art, have been overlooked by contemporary scholars seeking to interpret or understand Anglo-Saxon animal imagery. There has been no real discussion about what these sinuous creatures might have signified beyond generalized use, like interlace, as an apotropaic device.[220] Serpents are almost always depicted as interlacing either upon themselves, if depicted singly, or more often entwined and looping together, the exceptions being the double-headed snakes. They, therefore, make an obvious choice of creature to create interlacing patterns due to their body shape, and observation of their movement in nature would reveal how readily they twist and twine as they move or curl in on themselves at rest. However, as mentioned, there was a tendency by the seventh century towards elongation and abstraction which meant that nearly any animal type could appear serpentine and interlaced. If the intention was simply to create interlace and pattern, this could have been achieved by abstracted zoomorphic or simple geometric pattern, both of which are features traditional to Anglo-Saxon art.[221]

The serpent is a difficult creature to understand in a traditional, Anglo-Saxon context as it is usually understood and interpreted through the Christianized lens of later

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[219] Webster and Backhouse, 1991: no. 7
[220] Speake, 1980: 86-87; Meaney, 1981: 51; Kitzinger, 1993: 3-4; Hawkes, 1997: 333
[221] Åberg, 1926: 182-183; Suzuki, 2008: 1-3; Lees, 2010: 118; Karkov, 2011: 23-24. See Chapter 3: 200-206

literature.[222] Snakes are thus usually associated with evil, temptation, and the devil in Christian understanding,[223] even though Christ is credited with invoking the serpent as an example of wisdom in the Gospel of Matthew.[224] Regardless of such considerations, it is not necessary to assume that serpents had negative connotations in a pagan context. In fact, quite the opposite kind of meaning is suggested by the continued use of interlaced serpents well into the Christian period as apotropaic symbols in clearly Christian contexts, when combined with a Christian inscription, as on the eighth-century Coppergate Helmet from York,[225] or carved inside the door of a church, as on the western doorway of the late seventh-century St Peter's at Monkwearmouth.[226] The serpent clearly had positive powerful and talismanic functions, which remained so prevalent that the motif was incorporated into Christian contexts upon conversion and persisted into Christian Anglo-Saxon usage.

If it can be accepted that the serpent was not necessarily regarded in a negative light in traditional Anglo-Saxon culture, it seems reasonable to explore what positive qualities may have been suggested by the depictions found in the traditional artwork. As outlined, the snake is depicted in Anglo-Saxon art as a head (with the emphasis placed on either the gaping or biting jaw), and a body (its long and looping aspect being emphasized). In nature, a snake may be observed moving with grace and speed, sinuously slithering along a path or through the forest; it might also be curled up and resting, biding its time until its prey passes. Both this type of movement and stasis may have inspired the looping, twining shapes of serpents on the metalwork. More interestingly, perhaps, for an Anglo-Saxon observer would be watching a snake strike, be it against prey or threat. The

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[222] For further discussion of snakes in Anglo-Saxon art see Åberg, 1926; Speake, 1980; Hicks, 1993a; Maleczek, 2002; Gannon, 2003.
[223] Joines, 1974; Charlesworth, 2010
[224] Matthew 10:16
[225] Wilson, 1984: 67-69; Webster and Backhouse, 1991: 60-61, cat. no. 47
[226] Hawkes, 1997: 324-325

speed of the strike, the fear of the fangs, and the damage of the bite itself would likely have been well-known, as is indicated by *The Nine Herbs Charm*, recorded in the tenth century but understood to originate in an earlier oral tradition, against snake bites, which appeals to Woden:[227]

> A worm [snake] came crawling, it killed nothing. For Woden took nine glory twigs, he smote then the adder that it flew into nine parts.[228]

It might also be suggested that there was a sense of wisdom, patient and measured, associated with serpents in pagan understanding.[229] Snakes, though smaller and weaker than many predators in nature, and being 'earth-bound' are vulnerable to being trodden underfoot, are nonetheless effective hunters, and rely on speed and cunning, rather than power, for both their attacks and their own protection. In this respect, serpents can be seen as cautious and measured, more prone to hiding and waiting than aggression. While such behaviour might be deemed a mark of cowardice, something to be avoided and detested in a warrior society, the heroic ideal does seem to have included caution and cunning. According to the *commitatus* ethic, a warrior was expected to defend his lord to the death, but if the lord was killed then it was the warrior's responsibility to avenge him.[230] In *The Battle of Maldon* all the warriors fight to avenge their lord despite overwhelming odds and certain death.[231] In *Beowulf*, however, reference is made to warriors who survived such encounters, living to wreak vengeance at a more opportune time, as was the case with Hengist who ultimately avenged the death of his lord, Finn.[232] At the end of the poem it may be that Beowulf, once he becomes an older king, is being presented as a counterpoint

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[227] For discussion of the early Anglo-Sason origins of this charm see: Wilson, 1992: 38-39; Jolly, 1985: 284-289; North, 1997: 87-88; Glosecki, 2000: 91-123
[228] Storms, 1948: 189; Wilson, 1992: 38-39
[229] Davidson, 1964: 161; Speake, 1980: 92; North, 1997: 84-94; Gannon: 2003: 136-138
[230] Niles, 1994: 113; Gwara, 2008: 155-168
[231] *Maldon*, ll. 246-257 (Scragg, 1981: 64)
[232] *Beowulf*, ll. 1068-1158 (Klaeber, 2008: 37-41), see further Shippey, 1972: 21-29; 1985; Magennis, 2006: 48-49; Gwara, 2008: 318-319

to this alternative mode of heroic (wise and cautious) action, rushing in to engage the

dragon, reckless and heedlessly glory-seeking.[233] It is plausible, therefore, that the serpent,

despite being a less obvious exemplar of heroic ideals, might have embodied, for a warrior

culture, several traits and tendencies worth emulating. It is certainly likely that the image

of the serpent signified more than pattern and generalized protection, and may well have

recalled wisdom, cunning, speed, and dominance.

Having said this, it is impossible to completely overlook the pattern-like qualities

of serpentine ornament nor its prevalence on early Anglo-Saxon metalwork. It is perhaps

the case that, like the anonymous zoomorph, the serpent was deliberately employed as a

means of expressing ambiguity. The elaborate intertwining of single serpents and the

interlacing of multiple serpents possibly represents the conscious attempt to force the

viewer to see 'pattern' before deciphering 'beast', in this case 'serpent'.

2.3f The Fish

Fish can also be included among the more prevalent zoomorphic creatures featured in

early Anglo-Saxon art, commonly appearing on armament and recognisable by clear visual

conventions. Although sometimes shown from above, they are primarily seen in profile

and have long bodies and sharp predator-like heads, visible fins and a fan shaped or forked

tail.[234] They appear to have been the most common type of shield mount fitting dating

from the fifth and sixth centuries, occurring nearly twice as often as any other motif,[235] as

well as occasionally decorating other objects such as square-headed brooches, buckles, and

strap mounts.[236] Some have been abstracted or exaggerated, but most are clearly

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[233] *Beowulf*, ll. 2511-2514 (Klaeber, 2008: 86)
[234] Hicks, 1993a: 30-35
[235] Dickinson and Härke, 1992: 27-30; Dickinson, 2005: 155-156. For a comprehensive examination of early Anglo-Saxon shield fittings see: Dickinson and Härke, 1992; Dickinson: 2005
[236] Baldwin Brown, 1915: 2-3; Webster and Backhouse, 1991: 24-25; Timby, 1996: 41-42; Hines, 1997b: 97; Hines *et al*, 1999: 45; Dickinson, 2005: 155

recognisable as fish. The aquatic type of mounts are most often reconstructed to be visible

to a viewer, placed on the front of the shield,[237] however there is evidence that they were

also placed on the back of the shield, decorating the shield grip, and so visible (or at least

known) only to the bearer.[238] These animal-decorated shields display signs that they were

used in battle, indicating that the choice of decoration had an important practical function,

as well as symbolic meaning for the warrior.[239] The deliberate placement of fish, as

visible symbol or hidden talisman, on armament carried in battle suggests that the image of

a fish held a potent and perhaps apotropaic role in early Anglo-Saxon ornamentation,

arguably to enhance the power and effectiveness of both warrior and shield.

      Relatively naturalistic examples of fish mounts can be seen in the pair of late sixth-

century shield mounts found at Spong Hill in Norfolk (Fig. 2.81),[240] or the sixth- or

seventh-century mount found at Warren Hill in Suffolk (Fig. 2.82).[241] Both mounts would

have likely decorated a shield board, flanking a central boss. The Spong Hill mounts are of

gilt copper-alloy, and shaped like long and narrow fish with a sharply pointed head and a

forked tail. The tail is decorated with punch-work along the edge and five small

protrusions extend from the body, indicating pectoral and dorsal fins. The Warren Hill

mount, made from copper-alloy, has a wider body-shape and a fan-shaped tail but retains a

sharp, pointed head. Fins are indicated by small triangular protrusions from the body, and

the surface is ornamented with small, overlapping circles giving the suggestion of scales.

Two small gold filigree mounts in the form of semi-naturalistic fish have also been found

in the Staffordshire Hoard. One ornate mount (Fig. 2.83),[242] like the shield mounts

discussed, is seen in profile and bears the same key signifiers of identification as the

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[237] Dickinson and Härke, 1992: 77; Hicks, 1993a: 30; Dickinson, 2005: 147-149
[238] Dickinson and Härke, 1992: 52-60; Dickinson, 2005: 113-115, esp. table 1, 127
[239] Hicks, 1993a: 30-31; Dickinson, 2005: 160-161
[240] Norfolk Museum
[241] British Museum, 1927,1212.32. Dickinson, 2005: 127-129, 147, fig. 16a
[242] Staffordshire Hoard, 'dolphin'

previous examples: pointed head, narrow body and forked tail. The head is marked by a triple band of wire and tightly filled with filigree rings while the body is ornamented more loosely with hoops of filigree to indicate scales. The other mount is damaged at the head (Fig. 2.84),[243] making it impossible to say whether this was pointed, as might be expected, or if it was viewed in profile. The body is long and narrow, widening to a fan-shaped tail at the back, with four triangular fin protrusions and, while it might depict the form in profile as all the previously cited examples have been, the ornamentation of the body is bisected by a beaded line with opposing diagonal lines on either side, forming a herringbone-type pattern, rather than the rounded scales, and might therefore be interpreted as representing a fish seen from above.

A mid seventh-century sub-triangular buckle, found in 1861 in a grave at Crundale Downs in Kent (Fig. 2.85),[244] is ornamented by a fish which bears a striking resemblance to the damaged mount from the Staffordshire Hoard (Fig. 2.84). The silver buckle is decorated with gold and garnet forming three distinct areas of complex and doubtlessly meaningful decoration. However, of concern here is the most prominent decorative element of the buckle, a large gold fish appliqué, cast in high relief, running nearly the length of the buckle and filling the central plate. This has a long and narrow body that tapers to a fan-shaped tail, although spatial limitations constrain this. Like the Staffordshire Hoard mount, the body is bisected by a central ridge and filled with a herringbone pattern of diagonal lines, possibly suggesting its underlying skeletal structure. The fish is unquestionably depicted as if from above as both eyes, originally set with stones, probably garnets, are visible on the head. Very small, triangular fins are visible emerging from beneath the body about a third of the way down its length.

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[243] Staffordshire Hoard, K1663
[244] British Museum, 1893,0601.204

The distinctive aspects of the Anglo-Saxon depictions of fish, specifically the long narrow body, pointed head, and widening tail, have led to the suggestion that they are indicative of a specific type of fish, a pike, rendered not naturalistically but symbolically.[245] The rivers and waterways of England would have been home to a variety of aquatic life, including aggressive, predatory fish, like the pike. The constant association between fish and waters, and the idea that fish rule the waters as man rules the land, can be seen repeatedly in Old English literature.[246] *Maxims II* insists that the fish must be in the water,[247] while Riddle 85 of the Exeter Book equates a fish in the river to a man in his hall.[248] Clearly these aquatic predators would likely have been well known to the Anglo-Saxons, populating the native waters, and might have come to symbolize a fast and deadly underwater power, with attributes and significance that would be desirable or admirable in a man.

The fish shape, as is the case with many distinctive animals in Anglo-Saxon art, was also often abstracted when used as ornament and could sometimes take a form closer to a mutated aquatic monster than a fish.[249] The late sixth-century gilt copper-alloy mount discovered at Kenninghall in Norfolk is still recognisably fish shaped but is exaggerated, with the fins and tail lengthened while the head is proportionally smaller (Fig. 2.86).[250] This abstraction is furthered by the incised decoration forming a border around the body and the quatrefoil design centred on it. The sixth- or seventh-century gilt copper-alloy fish mount found at Barnes (Fig. 2.87),[251] outside of London, although similar to the

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[245] Hills, Penn, and Rickett, 1984: 7–8, 80–2, fig. 87; Dickinson, 2005: 127, 154
[246] Sorrell, 1994: 40-41
[247] *Maxims II*, ll 27b-28a: Fisc sceal on wætere cynren cennan. (Sweet, 1908: 168); Sorrell, 1994: 39; Cavill, 1999: 12
[248] Riddle 85: Nís mín sele swíge, ne ic sylfa hlúd ymb dryhtsele; unc dryhten scóp síþ ætsomne. Ic eom swiftra þonne hé, þrágum strengra, hé þreohtigra. Hwílum ic mé reste; hé sceal rinnan forð. Ic him in wunige á þenden ic lifge; gif wit unc gedǽlað, mé bið déað witod. Hwæt eom ic ? (Murphy, 2011: 19); Sorrell, 1994: 41; Cavill, 1999: 79-80; Bitterly, 2009: 15-18
[249] Clark, 1980: 348–349; Evison, 1987: 32–34; Dickinson, 2005: 154-156
[250] British Museum, 1883,0702.22
[251] Museum of London, 78.107/2

Kenninghall mount, takes the abstraction further, turning the head into a sharp point, enlarging the forked tail, expanding the incised decoration on the body, and elongating the fins to the extent that they resemble flippers or limbs. This transformation of the fish shape can become extremely exaggerated to a point where the fish attributes are almost unrecognisable, as in the late sixth-century gilt copper-alloy aquatic shield mount from the burial complex at Sutton Hoo (Fig. 2.88). The pointed head and forked, fan-shaped tail are enlarged and elongated, becoming extremely narrow. The fins are lengthened well past what could be called flippers and appear almost as jointed limbs. Finally the body itself, ornamented with incised circles and lines, has been reduced to geometric shapes, diamonds, circles, and triangles, rather than anything naturalistically fish-like. With the early aquatic shield mounts it is possible to see transformation from recognisable and nearly naturalistic, to abstracted and fantastical; they range from clearly recognisable 'fish', which some scholars suggest are sufficiently distinct to identify as pike,[252] to creatures that seem caught somewhere between fish and quadruped with limbs more suited for dry land than swimming, and which can be classed as aquatic monsters.[253]

2.3g 'There be Dragons'

Perhaps related to such fantastical creatures are dragons, which seem to have held a unique place in the Anglo-Saxon imagination, being at once both fascinating and fearsome. They are emblematic of an elemental otherness, inhabiting the air and being full of fire, bestial yet also clever and cunning. It has been argued that the idea of dragons and other fabled creatures can be demonstrated, linguistically, to have been firmly rooted in the pre-Christian superstitions and stories circulating in Anglo-Saxon England.[254] Furthermore,

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[252] Dickinson, 2005:154
[253] Dickinson and Härke, 1992: 77; Hicks 1993: 30; Dickinson, 2005: 154
[254] Davidson, 1950: 169-185; Evans, 1985: 85-112; Lee, 1998; 234; Rauer, 2000: 52-61; Symons, forthcoming: 73-93. I am also very grateful to Victoria Symons for discussion of this subject.

although of Norse origin, a reference in *Beowulf* suggests that the legend of Sigurd, which features Sigurd's slaying of the dragon Fafnir, as well as mentioning his father, Sigemund's, own dragon slaying feat, was likely familiar in Anglo-Saxon England:[255]

> Sigemund arose, after his death-day, with no little glory,
> since the fierce warrior killed the dragon, guardian of the hoard.[256]

Beowulf, itself, introduces a dragon in the second half of the poem to act as a challenge for Beowulf, as king, to face, a challenge which eventually and inevitably leads to his downfall.[257] Dragons also appear in other Old English literature, often becoming the embodiment of hidden or concealed wealth as they hoard gold in their barrows.[258] They are even recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, appearing over Lindisfarne in advance of the devastating Viking raid dated to 793:[259]

> In this year dire forewarnings came over the lands of Northumbria, and terrified those people miserably. These were violent winds and lightning without measure, and fiery dragons were seen flying in the sky. These tokens were soon followed by a great hunger, and a little afterwards in the same year, on the 8th of January, the harrowing of the heathen men wretchedly destroyed God's church in Lindisfarne through theft and slaughter.[260]

However, despite such presences in the language and literature, and arguably in their imagination, dragons are extremely uncommon in the visual record of early Anglo-Saxon England.

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[255] Margeson, 1980: 183-211; Evans, 2005: 216; Symons, forthcoming

[256] Beowulf, ll 884b-887a: Sigemunde gesprong æfter deaðdæge dom unlytel syþðan wiges heard wyrm acwealde hordes hyrde (Symons, forthcoming)

[257] Lee, 1998: 249-50; Fulk and Cain, 2003: 210-11; Baker, 2013: 209-21; Symons, forthcoming

[258] Kirk Dobbie, 1942: 55-57. See also Chardonnens, forthcoming; Symons, forthcoming

[259] Irvine, 2004: 42; Symons, forthcoming

[260] *ASC*, sub annis 793: Her wæron reðe forebecna cumene ofer Norþanhymbra land ond þæt folc earmlic bregdon: þæt wæron ormete þodenas ond ligrescas, ond geseowene fyrene dracan wæron on þam lyfte fleogende. Þam tacnum sona fyligde mycel hunger, ond litel æfter þam þæs ilcan geares on .vi. idus Ianuarii earmlice heðenra manna hergung adiligode Godes cyrican in Lindisfarenaee þurh reaflac ond mansleht. (Earle and Plummer, 1892: 55-56)

Returning to the abstracted and mutated fish discussed above (Fig. 2.88),[261] the multiple instances of elongation of the fish fins into proto-legs were not cases of flawed rendering or artistic flourish and, so, must reflect a deliberate decision rather than accident of design. Whether these outlandish forms should be read as abstracted fish or intentional depictions of sea monsters is less clear.[262] In either case these aquatic creatures demonstrate a transitory moment, depicted as they are, moving between being one thing or another, from the recognisable fish to the fantastical monster, and perhaps in some way carrying the significance of both.

This metamorphosis of fish into something more akin to an aquatic monster has led to the suggestion that perhaps the more fantastical beasts and dragons evolved out of this type of image. The so-called dragon mount from the Sutton Hoo shield retains a body shape reminiscent of a stylized aquatic monster (Fig. 2.89).[263] It has a long and narrow body ornamented with cloisonné garnet and zoomorphic interlace, an elongated head and curved neck with focus being given to the large mouth; the sharp carnivorous teeth are bared, taking up half the head and are balanced at the other end by the round, garnet eye. Three pairs of joints set along the length of the narrow body are also highlighted by garnets, from which coils of gold extend as limbs, flippers, or wings, while the 'tail' is articulated in the same manner as the wings on the birds of the Sutton Hoo purse lid (Fig. 2.55) (and the St. Stephen's mount in the British Museum (Fig. 2.56)). Identified as a dragon, this is clearly a fantastical creature, not drawn completely from any naturalistic prototype, but its form suggests it may well be a composite creature made from elements of the two more common types of shield mount: predatory fish and birds.[264] As noted, birds, like fish and other identifiable zoomorphs, are distinguished by a few salient

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[261] British Museum, 2001,0103.3.f.1
[262] Dickinson, 2005: 156
[263] British Museum, 1939,1010.94.B. Bruce-Mitford, 1978: 60-63; Speake, 1980: 32; Dickinson, 2005: 135
[264] Hauck, 1980: 486; 1985-1987: 3(i) 16-28; Høilund Nielsen, 1997: 129-148; Dickinson, 2005:146

features, namely a curved beak, large round eye, wings, with the wing joint emphasized, and talons. Looking at the form of the Sutton Hoo dragon it is possible to pick out the parts of its body which seem to belong to one identifiable animal motif or the other. For example, the long narrow tapering body and roughly forklike tail are reminiscent of the typical Anglo-Saxon fish shape, while the six wings or flippers with garnets inset to emphasize the joint as well as the rough shape of the head with round garnet eye recall aspects of the predatory bird type. It might be argued that, in melding these two potent zoomorphs together, the symbolic and talismanic aspects of both independent forms are being invoked presenting a creature of considerable power, potentially denoting aggression and menace, arguably traits that would be desired in a warrior at the time of battle.

The effect of one element metamorphosing into something 'other' is widespread in the decoration of metalwork in early Anglo-Saxon England. Flourishes on brooches or pendants become bird heads; wing tips, as on the Sutton Hoo helmet, become boars' heads; two animals confronting each other become a face-mask. The back of the head of the bird mount on the Sutton Hoo shield, behind the distinctive comma-shape, is an extended, crest-like protrusion (Fig. 2.90). This crest terminates with a backward-facing animal head with sharp, exposed teeth similar to the head of the winged dragon. The transformation of the bird's crest into a snarling beast head can be seen as an example of this metamorphosis as it is transforming one beast into another and yet remaining both at the same time. A more extreme example can be seen in the iron grip on the back of the shield which forms a very strange composite creature (Fig. 2.91),[265] presenting either a pair of serpents or reptilian beasts (or a single double-headed one), from which pairs of bird heads and "dragon" heads sprout along the sides, or alternatively form the terminals of legs. While noting such phenomena it is important to bear in mind that the decorative

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[265] British Museum, 1939,1010.94.a

choices which transform an animal from one type to another, or even several others, or to ornament an object with multiple zoomorphs, must have held more significance than simply reflecting the need to ornament; each animal type was likely used deliberately.

As stated earlier, dragons appear with some frequency in Old English literature ranging from poetic sagas, like *Beowulf*, to 'historical' accounts, such as Bede's reference to the dragons that inhabited the land where Lastingham was later built, and therefore were a familiar concept to the early Anglo-Saxons.[266] In the literature, both the Old English word *draca* and the Germanic word *wyrm* are used to denote a creature we would call a dragon.[267] *Wyrm* is also used to refer to serpents or snakes; however for the purposes of this argument it is necessary to see dragons as distinct from serpents or snakes as it is clear that dragons were understood to fly, while serpents could not, and the visual conventions for depicting the two are very different. Nonetheless the terms, as well as compound words or kennings derived from the root words, were used interchangeably, often in the same poem, as in *Beowulf*.[268]

Old English terminology for animals, especially in poetic language, was most often related to either the animal's habitat or means of motion.[269] Fish (and other aquatic creatures) are defined by their fins, tails, and the water in which they live. Birds are similarly defined by their wings, feathers, and the air through which they fly. To that end, as Paul Sorrell argues, Anglo-Saxon thought was concerned with the boundaries that

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[266] Beowulf, ll. 2208-3047 (Klaeber, 2008: 74-103); Bede, *HE* III.23 (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 286-289); ASC 793 (Plummer and Earle, 1893: 55-56)

[267] The Old English word *draca* 'dragon' (Old Norse *dreki*) is derived ultimately from Greek δράκων, such creatures are also referred to using the Germanic word *wyrm* 'dragon', 'serpent' (Old Norse *ormr*). The terms are often used interchangeably, as in *Beowulf* (e.g. ll. 2211b and 2287a). In the contexts covered in this paper, the words *draca* and *wyrm*, and their Old Norse cognates, are understood to refer to the same serpentine, mythological creature. See Evans, 2005: 217; Symons, forthcoming 2014. Biblical and hagiographic dragons were also incorporated into Anglo-Saxon concepts of the creature, for which see Rauer, 2000: 52-61

[268] Sorrell, 1994: 38; Symons, forthcoming

[269] Sorrell, 1994: 34-40

separate classes of animals and make them distinct from one another.[270] A dragon,

however, transgresses the natural order,[271] usually described as living underground but

moving by means of wings in the air, and when roused to enter into the human world is

perceived as a fierce and alien invader, arguably more unsettling, threatening, and

powerful for that transgression. Given this understanding of the role of the Anglo-Saxon

understanding of dragon, as a terrifying and fantastical creature that defies the natural

order, the depiction of such a beast as a composite creature can clearly be seen to allude to

the same notion.

Although images of dragons are very rare; with only three examples extant – all

from Sutton Hoo (the full dragon mount and dragon heads on the front and back of the

Sutton Hoo shield, and a partial mount found in Mound 2 with similar characteristics) (Fig.

2.92),[272] in each instance, the head is large and dominated by sharp teeth that fill the

slightly open mouth, as if the creature were baring its fangs. It has been suggested, due to

the focus given to the teeth, that these Anglo-Saxon dragons depict one classical

conception of the wolf-headed, reptile-bodied and fish-tailed dragon,[273] a description that

automatically assumes that such a monster must be a composite creature that defies nature.

The dragons have also been interpreted as more elaborate versions of a sea-monster,

bearing flippers rather than wings to highlight an underwater existence.[274] Alternatively, it

might be argued that the few dragons found in Anglo-Saxon art were neither intended to

be read as clearly flying dragons nor obviously swimming monsters but left deliberately

open to either, or even both, understandings.

The shape of the dragon clearly evolves from the naturalistic fish and the aquatic

fish-beasts that arise from the abstraction of that form, and can thus be seen as a furthering

[270] Sorrell, 1994: 41
[271] Sorrell, 1994: 41-42
[272] Speake, 1980: 90; Dickinson, 2005: 135
[273] Hauck, 1985-1987: 3(i) 16-28; Høilund Nielsen, 1997: 129-148; Dickinson, 2005:146
[274] Hauck, 1985-1987: 3(i) 16-18; Dickinson, 2005: 157; 2011: 647

of the process. The addition of the third pair of limbs, be they wings, legs, or flippers, and the alteration of the head and teeth, however, transform the creature into something entirely fantastical and removed from the animals found in nature. Nonetheless, it is impossible to ignore the fishy origins of the form and not see something aquatic about the monster. Likewise, if the understanding of monsters and dragons were as commonplace as the literature suggests,[275] it would have been easy to see a razor-toothed, flying, fearsome reptile in the form. It therefore follows that this type of fantastical beast was intended to recall both kinds of monster to the mind of its viewer, the fearsome sea creature and ferocious dragon, embodying the mythology of both, and capable of shifting from one to the other depending on how the audience was thinking about it in the act of viewing.

2.3h The Anonymous Zoomorph

A discussion of the types of animals found in traditional, early Anglo-Saxon ornament would be incomplete without mention of the unidentifiable animals here termed 'anonymous zoomorphs'. These beasts appear in a very wide range of forms; sometimes without much 'abstraction' *per se* yet still lacking identifying features that would allow a viewer to definitively identify the creature, but, more commonly, elongated and distorted to such a degree that they are hardly recognizable as animal at all. The often ribbon-like forms of these zoomorphs fill the available decorative space with interlace of varying degrees of complexity but are marked as distinct from a serpent, already discussed, by their limbs, which indicate biped or quadruped, and often terminate in a feathery paw.[276]

A line of crouching relatively un-abstracted quadrupeds can be seen encircling a gold seax hilt fitting from the Staffordshire hoard (Fig. 2.93).[277] The zoomorphs all have

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[275] For descriptions of monsters in Old English literature see: Godden and Lapidge, 1991; Alexander, 2002; Saunders, 2012
[276] Speake, 1980: 42-43; Hicks, 1993a: 66-67
[277] BMAG, 2010.0138K0567

long, biting jaws, indicated by an oval form, clamped onto the hind leg of the zoomorph preceding them, a roughly circular head with a round eye, set with a tiny globule of glass,[278] in the centre. The body forms a gentle S-curve with teardrop-shaped limb joints set at the middle point and the back to indicate fore and hind limbs. These taper from the joint and bend forward to terminate in three-pronged feathery paws, the foreleg resting under the beast's chin while the hind leg stretches at an impossible angle to rest above the beast's back. The line of beasts faces its mirror image around the opening, where the seax blade originally sat, and the two beasts at the terminals confront their counterparts, interlacing their legs and, at the terminal near the head of the animals, biting each other's forelimb. This zoomorphic decoration is easily recognizable as a number of discrete beasts with four legs but any further identification becomes impossible; they could be horses, wolves, deer, domestic dogs, or any other animal that walks on four legs. A frieze of bipeds can be seen in the third register of the cheek-piece also from the Staffordshire hoard (Fig. 2.94). The bipeds, located two registers above the 'horse' discussed above,[279] form a tightly woven chain with their bodies, framed by the heads and feet above and below respectively. It takes a moment to decipher the pattern, but once done, each animal can be seen to have a round eye set into a serpent-like head with open, beak-like jaws. It is possible to follow the curving body from the head to where it terminates in a single teardrop joint and bent leg, complete with feathery, three-pronged paw. The zoomorph has a head at one end and a foot at the other, making it a biped and unlike any animal known in nature.

Zoomorphs can also be extremely abstracted into dense interlace which is difficult to resolve into the component parts necessary to discern a zoomorph rather than simply

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[278] Staffordshire Hoard: http://www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk/staritems/seax-hilt (accessed 26 August 2014); Leahy and Bland, 2009: 32
[279] See above: 81-82

geometric pattern. Such is the case with a cast copper-alloy disc brooch fragment (Fig. 2.95),[280] dating to the seventh century and found near Manton, Lincolnshire. Initially the ornament appears to be a knotted and laced ribbon filled with diagonal hatching to give it texture. However a head is visible biting back on its body in the upper right part of the design; two small and subtle limbs with feathery paws can be seen at the bottom of the design, compressed and nearly overwhelmed by the loops formed by the body. The abstraction of this beast is too extreme to make any coherent whole, but the zoomorphic nature was deemed aesthetically or symbolically necessary and thus the head and the limbs are present and, with effort, the shape of the beast can be unravelled from the interlacing pattern.

The Great Gold buckle found in Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo (Fig. 2.96) is one of the most detailed and exuberant examples of such complex, zoomorphic interlace.[281] Dated to the early-seventh century and made from solid gold accented by niello, the brooch teems with representations of animal life. Thirteen separate creatures can be deciphered, some recognizable as birds or snakes, but others remain unidentifiable. This zoomorphic patterning, highlighted by the dark niello, fills the available surface almost entirely with its twisting, looping, densely layered form with only the large golden rivet bosses providing empty space and visual relief on the front plate.[282] Two bird heads sit at the shoulders of the buckle, curving around the two rivet bosses near the buckle loop. Snakes are found in the central roundel, along the loop of the buckle, and in the centre of the main buckle plate. After this accounting, five zoomorphs remain unidentifiable. Two pairs of abstracted, interlacing quadrupeds can be seen along the outer edges of the buckle plate, biting and entwining with each in the space between the rivet bosses and around the central serpents.

[280] PAS, NLM-013882
[281] British Museum, 1939,1010.1. Bruce-Mitford, 1978: 536-563; Webster and Backhouse, 1991: 31-33 cat. no 15; Evans, 1994: 109; Webster, 2012
[282] A more detailed description of the buckle can be found in Bruce-Mitford, 1978: 536–563; Evans, 1986: 89-91; Plunkett, 2001: 73–75

The larger of the two beasts in each pair curves around the single rivet boss at the base of the buckle with large open jaws. Between these two sets of gaping jaws and below the lowermost rivet boss crouches the thirteenth zoomorph, a discreet quadruped that bites down on its own foreleg. Despite the lack of abstraction, this last zoomorph lacks any clear identifying signifiers and has, therefore, been suggested to be animals ranging from a dog,[283] to a horse,[284] but such explanations remain unconvincing due to the creature's extreme stylisation.

Like the serpent discussed previously, these creatures have eluded academic interpretation beyond their role as interlaced decorative motifs. While it might be suggested that, like the serpents and non-zoomorphic interlace, the sinuous, anonymous beasts served a generalized apotropaic function as decoration and ornament,[285] it is also possible that the complicated patterns created by the interlaced animals had a purpose beyond general apotropaic ornament; they may have been intended to create a space where perception might be intentionally distorted. When looking at the patterns formed by zoomorphic interlace, especially on metalwork, it can be seen that they convey a sense of shifting movement, an effect which would have been heightened by the movement of light and shadow over the surface of a highly polished object, and (in some cases) by the shifting movement of the wearer. It is possible that the creatures creating these patterns were kept anonymous deliberately to maintain a sense of ambiguity when viewing them. Attempts to identify these elusive animals would demand closer examination of the pattern and yet still defy clear classification. Engagement with the ornamentation on the buckle would have necessitated an extended period of viewing and active engagement with the

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[283] Adams, Unpublished paper "Riddle and reality: early Anglo-Saxon art styles in context" presented at Beasts in the Anglo-Saxon World Conference, UCL Institute of Archaeology, 11th – 12th June 2011
[284] Fern, Unpublished paper "Horse-power: the significance of the horse to early Anglo-Saxon identity and beliefs c. AD450-700" presented at Beasts in the Anglo-Saxon World Conference, UCL Institute of Archaeology, 11th – 12th June 2011
[285] Kitzinger, 1993: 3-4

multiple layers of the ornament.[286] Given the likely distance of most viewers from the object, the shifting light across the surface, and the time needed to clearly unpick the design of the buckle, it is likely that the buckle would have remained an ambiguous pattern of shifting lines, rather than resolving into clearly visible zoomorphs. Despite the primacy of the interlaced design, it can in no way be dismissed as meaningless or simply as surface covering.[287] Rather, the dissolution of the animals from specific and recognisable creatures into deliberately ambiguous components of complicated and visually shifting patterns suggest that there was considerable significance invested in the use of these anonymous zoomorphs in Anglo-Saxon ornament.

2.4 The Human Figure

Given the proliferation of zoomorphic ornament in Anglo-Saxon England, an abstracted but somehow living pattern, it might seem that images of recognisably human figures would also inhabit seventh-century Anglo-Saxon art. However, there are relatively few examples of such figures, suggesting that it was not, comparatively, a very common or popular motif; its use nevertheless indicates it had a role in the art of the traditional Anglo-Saxons (like their Germanic counterparts on the Continent).[288] Given this, the motif of the human figure can be usefully considered in an attempt to gain some insight into the potential concerns of the artists and their patrons.

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[286] Further discussion of this aspect of the buckle will follow in Chapter 3: 188-190
[287] Kendrick, 1972: 90; Åberg, 1926: 182-183; Karkov and Hardin Brown, 2003b: 3-4
[288] Chadwick Hawkes *et al*, 1965; Speake, 1980: 48– 49; Magnus, 1997: 200– 202; Speidel, 2002: 90– 112; Hawkes, 2011b: 205

2.4a Anglo-Saxon Faces

As with most of the zoomorphs depicted in early Anglo-Saxon art, the human head, or, perhaps more accurately, the face, can be represented as disembodied – a motif independent of the full human body, and noticeably more common as a decorative element both in isolation and as part of larger and more varied ornamental schemes. Traditional Anglo-Saxon representation of the human face carries some degree of abstraction, taken to a lesser or greater degree depending on the decorative scheme in which they appear. The place of the human face in Anglo-Saxon art, both in terms of its role in wider stylistic developments and its symbolic purpose, remains an on-going point of discussion.[289] Nonetheless, connections have been made between the use of the motif in England with the wider Germanic world and the emergence of social classifications and perceptions.[290] Human faces appear on the tiny, enigmatic late fifth- to early sixth-century brooches, more commonly called button brooches (Fig. 2.97),[291] and they can be similarly found both as the central decoration and worked into the borders of sixth-century saucer brooches (Fig. 2.98).[292] Human heads abound in the ornamentation of large square headed brooches (Fig. 2.99),[293] like the sixth-century example found at Chessell Down on the Isle of Wight, which contains eight human faces, both frontal and profile, hidden within its intricate zoomorphic decoration.[294]

Like most of the zoomorphs discussed here, the mode of representing the human face in early Anglo-Saxon art tends to be heavily stylized and schematic. Little attention is paid to overall proportion but the head tends to be oval and have large almond-shaped eyes. The face is usually mask-like – an appearance emphasized not only by the oversized

[289] Høilund Nielsen, 1999; Dickinson, 2009: 2; Suzuki, 2009: 338; Brundle, 2013: 1998-200
[290] Bailey, 1996: 293; Høilund Nielsen, 1999; Scarre, 2007: 18; Brundle, 2013: 200
[291] PAS, WILT-5CB991. Avent and Evison, 1982: 78– 91; Welch, 1985; Suzuki, 2008: 245– 55
[292] British Museum, 1893,0716.42. Dickinson, 2002: 164– 166, 172– 3, 178– 181
[293] British Museum, 1867,0729.5
[294] Hines, 1997: 1; Owen-Crocker, 2004: 124– 125; 2011: 96

eyes, but also by the often-stylized representation of the eyebrows and nose, which forms a 'lyre-shape'. The depictions almost always display facial hair in the form of a beard, either full-grown or nascent stubble, and/or a luxuriant moustache that covers the upper lip and often droops down the sides of the mouth.[295]

A frieze of these typical faces can be seen on the gilt copper-alloy rim of a drinking cup found in the seventh-century burial at Taplow, Buckinghamshire (Fig. 2.100).[296] The repoussé masks all bear the key features: almond-shaped eyes, lyre-shaped brow, drooping moustache and beards. Similar faces are found on a partial foil from the Staffordshire Hoard (Fig. 2.101),[297] which shows two faces linked by conjoined moustaches and was in all likelihood a decorative frieze like that on the Taplow drinking vessel. In addition to the large, drooping moustache, the Staffordshire Hoard faces also display the lyre-shaped brow over almond-shaped eyes set with beads of metal. A similar face, although more simplified and schematic, can also be seen at the lower register of each of the vandykes on the seventh-century Maplewood bottles found in Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo (Fig. 2.102),[298] beneath a pair of confronting, ribbon-like zoomorphs.[299] The face, a very narrow oval, is reduced to its key signifiers: the almond eyes set with round beads, the lyre-shaped brow, and a mouth surmounted by a heavy, drooping moustache. A slight protuberance of the repoussé below the mouth may be an indicator of the figure's beard but this is not entirely clear.

A common variation of the human face motif in seventh-century Anglo-Saxon art was the helmeted face, a man wearing a horned helmet. A well-worn copper-alloy mount

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[295] For examples of the hirsute appearance of the face see the buckle from Åker (Magnusson and Forman, 1976: 17); the square-headed brooches from Chessel Down (Hines, 1997c) and Barrington A (Hines, 1997c: 178); or both the repoussé panels and the face-mask of the Sutton Hoo helmet (Marzinzik, 2007)
[296] British Museum, 1883,1214.34
[297] Staffordshire Hoard, K1775
[298] British Museum, 1939,1010.122-127
[299] Evans, 1986: 66, fig. 51

(Fig. 2.103),[300] with traces of gilding, displays a simple version of this iconographic type. The mount is flat with the traditional lyre shape formed by the raised nose and oval eye depressions, set with round beads of metal. The head supports a helmet with large, bird-headed horns but this is not clearly differentiated from the rest of the face, which tapers to a point at the chin that might be a triangular beard, below the mouth and large drooping moustache. A more naturalistic version of the motif can be seen in a gilded copper-alloy mount from the first half of the seventh century found near Stamford Bridge in Yorkshire (Fig. 2.104).[301] Although minimally abstracted and exaggerated, this depiction of the face follows the traditional scheme of representation. The oval shaped head sports a proportional and detailed helmet with bird-headed horns. The lyre-shaped brows stand out in relief below the helmet's brim, above the oval shaped eyes set with round beads of black glass. A heavy, drooping moustache and long full beard, textured with grooves to indicate hair, encircle a visible lower lip.

It might be argued that the representation of an isolated human face in early Anglo-Saxon art, with its consistent stylized conventions, was more akin to a mask than that of a naturalistically rendered human, and indeed, it is commonly called a face-mask or humanoid mask by scholars.[302] The idea of these disembodied faces as masks is rendered more compelling by the use of masks as part of defensive armament, most notably, on the Sutton Hoo helmet (Fig. 2.105). Discovered in the course of excavation of the high-status seventh-century burial, the mask here is made of iron, crested, with a solid neck guard and cheek flaps ornamented with tinned and gilded copper-alloy decoration,[303] and likely takes its form from Roman parade helmets, as do many helmets in the Germanic world and the

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[300] PAS, LEIC-40DB05
[301] PAS, YORYM-024D31
[302] Salin, 1949– 59, iv: 272; Dickinson, 2002: 165
[303] Bruce-Mitford, 1974: 210–222; 1978: 138–231; Evans, 1986: 46–49; Carver, 1992: 343– 372; Richards, 1992: 131– 133; Marzinzik, 2003

few extant from Anglo-Saxon England.[304] It also has a rigid metal plate riveted to the cap, which would have fitted over the face of the wearer,[305] obscuring the features of the face, without completely covering it, while preserving eyeholes and nose holes.[306] Similar, albeit smaller and less ornate face guards survive on seventh-century helmets from Vendal and Valsgärde, Sweden (Fig. 2.106a-b).[307]

On the Sutton Hoo face-mask, rather than leave the plate flat, or decorating it with something abstract or patterned, a detailed replica of a face, a human mask complete with heavy brows over the eyes, a prominent nose, and moustache over the metal lips, was crafted from the bird motif.[308] Pressblech foils decorated with strips of interlace form the background to this appliqué. Like the other faces discussed here as applied repoussé work, this three-dimensional and life-sized version follows the traditional representational conventions. The oval eye-holes are framed by a lyre-shaped brow and nose (formed by the bird's body and outstretched wings); the bird's fanned tail becomes a drooping moustache with vertical, linear patterning to indicate hair (or feathers depending on whether the viewer is seeing the bird or the face), which curves downwards, covering the upper lip of the metal-moulded mouth. The mask's chin tapers to a rounded point but, as in the copper mount already discussed, this might indicate a beard: a possibility enhanced by the vertical pattern of strips of interlace, separated from the decorative scheme of the rest of the plate by two horizontal interlace strips set approximately even with the bottom of the nose.

This creation of a face to place over a face seemingly held more import than the practical function of a guard over the face in battle and must, therefore, be seen both as the

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[304] Davidson, 1965: 24; Bruce-Mitford, 1972; 1974: 198– 222; Campbell, 1982: 66; Frank, 1992: 55; Webster, 1992; Stoner, forthcoming
[305] Bruce-Mitford, 1968: 138–231; Evans, 1986: 46–49; Arnold, 1988: 75– 76; Marzinzik, 2007
[306] Arnold, 1988: 75– 76; Marzinzik, 2007
[307] Historiska museet, Stockholm. Stjerna, 1912: 9– 11; Chadwick-Hawkes *et al*, 1965: 19– 21; Bruce-Mitford, 1968: 27; Arent, 1969: 138– 141; Almgren, 1982: 11– 16; Speidel, 2002: 107– 108
[308] See above: 88

result of deliberate effort and symbolic choice to efface the wearer's identity and supplant it with whatever identity was embodied by the mask. This 'anonymisation' of the wearer arguably renders him both less and more than human. The blankness and flat aspect of a mask removes the humanity and personality of the wearer and might serve to intimidate an enemy in battle (although the Sutton Hoo helmet was likely never worn in actual battle)[309] or indeed unsettle anyone faced with its unchanging visage. The mask also serves to hide any expressions which might telegraph its wearer's thoughts or reactions, physically shielding the face. This effacement might have been intended to deliberately distance the wearer from their own humanity, their weaknesses and fears, and so embody the ideal of a virile, masculine warrior. In placing the mask over human features, the wearer could become both less than an individual man, anonymous and unemotional, and yet more than 'man', superhuman, shedding their humanity to become a 'universal' male warrior.

The consistency of the form of the Anglo-Saxon face, regardless of its place within a decorative scheme, the medium of its construction, or its naturalistic or schematic portrayal, indicates that the representational tradition was strongly ingrained in Anglo-Saxon culture. The motif remained recognizable, despite any abstraction, due to the repeated conventions employed to indicate the key features of the face. From the Style I face-masks found on brooches in the fifth and sixth centuries,[310] to a number of coins bearing analogous Anglo-Saxon stylized faces dating into the eighth century,[311] the continued use of the motif itself and the key signifiers of its form suggest that such representations remained potent and significant for the Anglo-Saxons throughout the period.

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[309] Harrison, 1993: 14; Marzinzik, 2007: 45-55

[310] Avent and Evison, 1982: 78– 91; Welch, 1985; Hines, 1997: 1; Dickinson, 2002: 164– 166, 172– 3, 178–181; Owen-Crocker, 2004: 124– 125; 2011: 96; Suzuki, 2008: 245– 55

[311] Gannon, 2003: 28– 30. The use of human busts on coins is a practice that pre-dates Roman coinage, although it is through Roman use that this type of image rose to prominence and circulated widely; the use of the stylized Anglo-Saxon face should therefore be seen as part of this wider tradition but, one that borrowed a native iconography (ibid.: 23– 30)

2.4b   Full-body Anglo-Saxon Figures

Compelling as the isolated faces are, it is impossible to ignore the much rarer but arguably more striking use of the full-length human figures in early Anglo-Saxon art. These motifs exhibit no real correlation with the way the human body appears or physically behaves in life: the parts are disproportionate in size, with limbs that appear too long, short or thin to function properly in relation to the rest of the body; and it is also extremely angular, both in the shape of the torso and in the attitude of the limbs, producing an overall flattened effect.

The exceptions to the flattened depiction of the human figure can be found amongst a group of small, metallic figurines dated roughly to the seventh century.[312] These rare three-dimensional forms present a problematic set of objects to analyze due to the lack of context for their original discovery and lack of access to many of them for visual examination.[313] Despite this, their form can be associated with three-dimensional human imagery found in a Vendel context in Sweden.[314] Recent scholarship has suggested significance in the placement of the figurines' hands in relation to their bodies, associating them with gestural customs and conventions seen in the continental Germanic world dating as far back as the second century BCE and through into the Viking age.[315]

A silver gilt pendant of a partially clothed human figurine was found near Carlton Colville in Suffolk (Fig. 2.107).[316] The figure is rendered with significant attention to detail and some attempt at naturalism. Nonetheless, the form of the head, wearing a cap that becomes the pendant loop, retains the traditional elements of Anglo-Saxon representation: the lyre-shaped brow, oval eyes, beard and moustache. The body is

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[312] For examples of Anglo-Saxon human figurines see further below: 122-124
[313] Brundle, 2013: 203-208
[314] Brundle, 2013: 208
[315] Brundle, 2013: 210-213
[316] British Museum, 2001,0902.1

relatively shapeless, with definition being provided primarily by the gilded shorts that cover it from the waist to the knees. Spindly arms are attached tightly to its sides but bend at a notional elbow to rest on the front of the body; the right arm hugs the waist while the left bends to place the hand on the chest. Some effort is also made to delineate a prominent penis between the figurine's legs, despite the gilded approximation of fabric covering. In contrast to this obviously male figurine from Carlton Colville, a copper alloy female figure (Fig. 2.108),[317] with visible breasts, was excavated from Grave 5, found suspended from a chatelaine, at Broadstairs in Kent.[318] It is badly corroded at the head but the body is largely undamaged, arranged in an awkward pose. The figure stands with its legs spread wide but bowed inwards with pigeon-toed feet while the hands are clasped in front the waist.[319] Rolls visible at the neck and the waist seem to suggest that clothing, possibly a tunic, is rucked up leaving the figure's lower half naked. A third copper-alloy figurine (Fig. 2.109),[320] found near a barrow at Breach Down in Kent, is more abstracted and crudely formed than the previous two examples. It has a doweled head with deeply drilled round eyes framed by a slightly raised lyre-shape. There is a bump approximately two-thirds of the way down the head that was most likely the mouth but no decorative details can be clearly discerned in that region. The body is elongated and disproportionate with two thin arms bent so the hands rest, one slightly above the other, approximately where the stomach is, and a pair of extremely short legs are indicated by a V-shape at the base of the figurine.

These objects are very small, fitting easily into the palm of a hand, and highly portable.[321] In general, they appear to have been intended to be worn on the body by means of suspension loops, like an amulet or talisman, or slotted into some sort of base,

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[317] British Museum, 1988,0412.1
[318] Webster and Minter, 2007: 225; Brundle, 2013: 209
[319] For discussion of the meaning of the arm gestures see Brundle, 2013: 211-212
[320] British Museum, 1884,0408.1
[321] Brundle, 2013: 203-204

like a small statue or idol.[322] As a result, it has been suggested that they represent heroes

or deities, god-like figures, which are tied to ideas of supernatural protection and cultic or

shamanistic practice.[323] Given their very small scale, the figurines must be considered

objects of personal, private use, not intended for highly visible displays or public

viewing.[324] In light of the peculiarities of the three dimensional figurines as well as their

rarity and lack of context within the Anglo-Saxon material record, for the purposes of this

study they must be considered as an anomalous type of representation, related to the wider

modes of depicting the human figure but distinct from it and responding to a separate set

of rules and serving a separate function.

Returning to the two-dimensional representations of the human figure in Anglo-

Saxon art, a general awkwardness in the body (seen in the figurines) can be partly

explained in the applied decoration by the fact that the figure is often arranged so that it

fills the field of decoration, meaning the arms can sometimes be compressed to the sides of

the torso, or the legs can be widely bent at impossible angles, as can be seen in the (early

seventh-century) Finglesham buckle which displays an isolated human figure filling the

field of decoration on the triangular plate (Fig. 2.110).[325] Here, the single male figure cast

in low relief stands facing forward, holding a spear in each hand in such a way that they

form a line connecting the base to the upper points of the plate, effectively framing the

figure; he appears to be naked apart from a wide belt with an oval buckle at his waist. As

his genitalia are clearly delineated, it appears this nudity is an important aspect of the

figure. Above the belt, his torso and hips are squared, facing outward, but his feet, and his

legs, bent slightly at the knees, are turned to the viewers' left. The disproportionately large

face is also turned out towards the viewer, and is stylized to the extent that it appears

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[322] Webster and Minter, 2007: 225; Brundle, 2013: 209-210
[323] Webster, 2011: 474; 2012: 82; Brundle, 2013: 208-209
[324] Brundle, 2013: 209
[325] Ashmolen, LI1326.23, in private collection. Chadwick-Hawkes *et al*, 1965: 17; Marzinzik, 2003: 62

mask-like with its sharply triangular ovoid shape, prominent almond-shaped eyes, and the angular line, cast in deep relief, of the helmet and nose-guard which serves to accentuate the nose and eyebrows more familiarly articulated by the typical lyre-shaped form. The distinctive helmet is surmounted by two horns curving upwards from the cap and meeting at the tips in the form of confronting bird heads.[326]

A similar image can be seen on a badly damaged copper-alloy plate discovered near Ayton, Berwickshire, thought to be part of a seventh-century triangular buckle, like that from Finglesham (Fig. 2.111).[327] The Ayton plate is missing portions both above and below the surviving section but depicts the torso and most of the head of a human figure, cast in relief, holding a spear on either side and wearing a helmet with horns curving inward.[328] Like its Finglesham counterpart this figure bends its arms at impossible angles in order to grip and hold the two spear shafts close to its body; however the arms of the Ayton figure are longer and more spindly, requiring them to bend at a more extreme angle in order to fit the field of decoration. As the plate is fragmentary it is unclear if the figure was clothed or nude or if the helmet terminals formed predatory bird heads. Nonetheless the similarities between the two figures are striking. A further very worn spear-wielding figure can be seen on a copper-alloy, openwork terminal dated to the first half of the seventh century (Fig. 2.112).[329] Despite the crudity of the decorative detail, this figure also clearly wears a horned helmet with bird-headed terminals with a band or belt around his waist, and holds two tall, straight objects (spears), on either side of his body. Much of the detail of the face has been worn away but the distinctive lyre-shape framing the depressions of the eyes is still visible. Whether he had a moustache or beard or if he wears a robe or is nude apart from his belt can no longer be discerned.

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[326] For full account see Chadwick-Hawkes *et al*, 1965: 18
[327] National Museums of Scotland, NMS, X.IG 22. Blackwell, 2007: 165– 167
[328] Blackwell, 2007: 165– 166
[329] PAS, BERK-4F2E17

Two analogous figures are also preserved in four of the decorative foil panels on the Sutton Hoo helmet (Fig. 2.113). These tinned and gilded copper-alloy panels depict a pair of men, each holding spears and wearing a horned helmet with bird-headed terminals, which unlike the other two examples are fully clothed in knee length tunics. Yet, like the Finglesham man, they stand with their torsos and heads facing forwards while the lower body is turned sideways. The outer leg of each figure kicks out towards the edge of the panel while the inner arms are raised to head-height. The limbs are awkwardly cramped and bent, to accommodate the confines of the space of the foil and the plethora of weaponry included in the scene. The men are more heavily armed than any of the previous examples: each hold two downward-facing crossed spears in their outer hands and a short sword raised in their inner hands, the arms crossing each other; two additional spears are crossed in the space between. The long shafts of the spears again form a border, framing the figures as on the three pieces already discussed. It has been suggested that the somewhat unusual body position indicates movement, perhaps depicting some kind of ritual or dance.[330]

The motif of a full-length human figure wearing a horned helmet and bearing spears is repeated multiple times within the limited corpus of early Anglo-Saxon art and seems to be typographically linked to a wider body of near contemporary material in Scandinavia where it appears predominantly on helmet foils, as can be seen again in dies from Torslunda (Fig. 2.114).[331] As with the Anglo-Saxon material, these too are commonly thought to depict movement, performance, or dance and have therefore been associated with religious ritual.[332]

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[330] Bruce-Mitford, 1978: 186–9; Speidel, 2002: 101–12; Blackwell, 2007: 168
[331] Historiska museet, Stockholm, Öland foil
[332] Gunnell, 1995: 66–67

Fragmentary decorative foils, most likely originally part of helmet decoration, featuring friezes of standing warriors have also been discovered in the Staffordshire Hoard (Fig. 2.115).[333] Here the warriors appear to face the same direction, wearing knee-length tunics or armour, holding a small shield in one hand and a spear in the other, with a sword fastened at their hip. They may have been wearing helmets with bird ornaments, but damage to the foils makes this hard to ascertain. Nevertheless, helmet foils depicting analogous friezes of warriors (with animal ornamented helmets) have been found at Vendel,[334] suggesting that the Staffordshire Hoard warriors may have been similarly helmed. Another fragmentary foil found with the Hoard displays warriors kneeling on one knee while holding shield and spear before them and gazing upwards (Fig. 2.116).[335] The design of these foils appears to be unique within the corpus of extant art from the wider Germanic world.[336]

The other historiated panel (Fig. 2.117), alternating with the helmeted figures from Sutton Hoo, depicts a male rider, mounted on a horse, holding a targe and a spear raised above his head. Below the horse's hooves lies the elongated body of a second figure, dressed in a knee-length, textured garment, who reaches up to the horse's reins, stabbing it in its breast with a sword. A third, diminutive figure crouches behind the rider on the back of the horse; he also holds a targe in one hand and grips the main rider's spear with the other. The horse-and-rider motif appears to represent a relatively rare decorative choice in Anglo-Saxon metalwork, although fragments of stamped foils apparently depicting a horse rider have recently been found in the Staffordshire Hoard (Fig. 2.118-19).[337] Two fragments in particular fit together to show enough of the scene to make out the galloping

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[333] Staffordshire Hoard, K1382
[334] Quast, 2009
[334] Stolpe and Arne, 1912; Høilund Nielsen, 2010
[335] Staffordshire Hoard, K1556
[336] Høilund Nielsen, 2010
[337] Staffordshire Hoard, K1624 (a), K1400 (b). Høilund Nielsen, 2010

horse, the leg and shield of the mounted man, and the stabbing hand, torso, and lower

portion of the face of the falling figure. The scene, incomplete though it may be, offers a

strong parallel, although not an exact copy, of the motif from the Sutton Hoo helmet.[338]

Despite this apparent paucity of the rider motif in early Anglo-Saxon art, it has a

rich history in antiquity.[339] Soldiers on horseback, victorious in battle, became a common

motif in Roman art. The motif could be found in the heart of the Roman empire, as can be

seen in the numerous scenes of cavalrymen in battle found on Trajan's Column, finished at

the beginning of the second century, to the furthest reaches of the provinces, often

associated with the cavalry of the Roman army, as illustrated by the so-called triumphant

rider tombstone (Fig. 2.120),[340] dated to the end of the first century, found in Lancaster.[341]

It can be found on Roman metalwork as well, as found on the Hallaton Helmet (Fig.

2.121),[342] a silver-gilt Roman cavalry helmet thought to be deposited as part of a hoard in

Leicestershire in the first century, with the image of a horse on a rider with a winged

Victory behind him in low relief on the cheek plate.[343] Given the associations between

participation in battle and Roman perceptions of manliness,[344] the popularity of a scene

showing a victorious rider literally riding over a vanquished foe makes sense, tapping into

ideas of power, dominance, and control.[345] A variation of the horse and rider iconography

from the classical world is the *adventus* motif, bearing less directly martial associations but

retaining associations with power, triumph, and victory.[346] The *adventus*, or ceremonial

entrance into a city following a victory, was originally a ritual performed by generals

[338] Høilund Nielsen, 2010. Further discussion of the equestrian foils can be found on the Staffordshire Hoard website: http://www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk/the-staffordshire-hoard-horseman-helmet-foil (accessed 26 06 2014)
[339] Mackintosh, 1986: 1-6
[340] Lancaster Museum, LANLM.2008.2
[341] Schleiermacher, 1984: 28; Bull, 2007
[342] Harborough Museum
[343] Kennedy, 2012; Sharp and James, 2012
[344] McDonnell, 2006: 10-11
[345] Hölscher, 2003: 11-12
[346] MacCormack, 1972: 721-722; Hawkes, forthcoming

returning from successful campaigns but had been co-opted by the emperors by the fourth century as an iconographic symbol of power and authority.[347] The imagery of imperial *adventus* was well established by the seventh century (Fig. 2.122), depicting the formal arrival of the emperor, on horseback or enthroned on a chariot, advancing towards the city he was entering. A conflation of these two types of horse-and-rider imagery can be seen in the early sixth-century Barberini ivory (Fig. 2.123).[348] The emperor rides on horseback in triumph with symbols of victory around him, indicating a triumphal *adventus*, but is armed with a spear and leading a captured prisoner, his fallen foe, behind him, indicative of a battle scene.[349] An, arguably, shorthand variation of this image type, a mounted rider with overtones of victory and power, is found on the reverse of Roman and late antique coins (Fig. 2.124).[350] The portability of the coins allowed them to move throughout the empire, a process which likely aided in the transmission of the visual motif into new cultures and new contexts.

Whether the image was introduce through coinage, the artwork associated with the Roman army, or imported by other means,[351] the motif was clearly important in the Germanic world.[352] Images of mounted warriors, similar to the Sutton Hoo helmet panel and the Staffordshire hoard foils, are found in contemporary Scandinavian contexts, as on helmet foils found at Vendel (Fig. 2.125a)[353] and Valsgärde (Fig. 2.125b),[354] as well as other Germanic regions, as on a gold bracteate (Fig. 2.126) from Pliezhausen, in Germany.[355] In these images, the rider is part of a victor-and-vanquished scene but becomes more aggressive than the Mediterranean influenced iterations. The mounted

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[347] MacCormack, 1972: 721-723; Hawkes, forthcoming. See also Kantorowicz, 1944
[348] Musée du Louvre, OA 9063
[349] Kitzinger, 1977: 97; Gaborit-Chopin, 2003: no 9
[350] PAS, WMID-2C5A44. Grant, 1958: 54; 1995: 106; Vagi, 2000: 54
[351] Quast, 2009: 331-334
[352] Quast, 2009
[353] Historiska museet, Stockholm
[354] Historiska museet, Stockholm. Stolpe and Arne, 1912: pl. VI, 1
[355] Landesmuseum Württemberg. Quast, 2009: 333-334; Høilund Nielsen, 2010

warrior, bearing numerous weapons, is actively engaged in a fight with an enemy on foot, who is not quite defeated, who stabs the horse.[356] This variation, graphically depicting the rider enacting violence upon, and receiving violence in return, from the enemy beneath the horse's hooves seems to prioritize a different set of associations than the classical exemplars. This recasting of the rider as active warrior arguably preserves earlier symbolism of the motif from its late antique use while adding new significances.

Together with zoomorphic interlace panels and appliqués, the figural panels on the Sutton Hoo helmet form a complex decorative programme, but it is notable that both types seem to have been deliberately arranged on specific parts of the helmet, corresponding to certain parts of the wearer's head. Two 'dancing men' panels are set on the helmet cap, over the eyes, while the remaining two are set on the cheek flaps on either side of the face, apparently placed near points of vulnerability for the wearer. The twelve rider panels are placed around the base and up each side of the helmet cap to meet the double-headed serpent crest, effectively encircling the wearer's head. Here again they seem to have been placed on areas of the helmet that might be considered more vulnerable, in this case to attack from behind or from a blind spot to the side.[357]

Despite the varying find-spots and objects featuring the images of full-length figures considered thus far in early Anglo-Saxon art, all share a number of traits in material and motif: all depict male figures with some kind of weapon and armament, be it spear, sword, armour or helmet, and all decorate a single metal plate or foil, gilded or plain, with the design beaten into it by either pressblech or repoussé. The final figures to be considered here display none of these features, although they are unquestionably male. The two figures on the early seventh-century purse lid from Sutton Hoo are formed of

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[356] Speidel has argued that the Germanic iterations of this motif may depict a method of fighting whereby a warrior on foot stabs the horse of a mounted foe (2004:134– 146)
[357] Williams, 2011: 106-109

intricate garnet and millefiore cloisonné (Fig. 2.127). The motif, figured twice on the lid, depicts a man between two beasts. He stands with legs out-spread and arms curved in to his collarbone, while two profile beasts flank him, their legs inter-twined with that of the man. While the three protagonists appear to stand upright, another explanation sees the man lying on his back, seen from above, while the two beasts lie on their sides facing him. Whether this is indeed the case, the male figure is, like the other examples, heavily stylized: the body and limbs are out of proportion, the arms being too thin and the legs squat and overly muscled, while the joints bend at improbable angles to adopt unnatural positions. The legs are widely splayed, seemingly to draw focus between them on to what may be exposed genitalia, this time formed by the patterning of the gold background, rather than the organ being cast in relief. The head of the figure is round rather than oval, and lacks the 'lyre-shaped' motif of the prominent brow and nose, but the eyes are almond shaped and prominent, and the decorative detail around the mouth and chin suggest the outline of a beard and large drooping moustache. While the variations of material and form distinguish this image from the others, they do not detract from the overall impression of the distinctly Anglo-Saxon articulation of the human form, which tends to heavy stylization and the repetition of a limited range of formulaic motifs.

Given this, the way the 'man' is depicted in the traditional art of early Anglo-Saxon England may offer some clues about its purpose and significance. One result of the extreme stylization, which renders the human form awkward and the face a mask, is the presentation of a figure more akin to pattern than natural representation; in effect, by distorting the human body and shielding the face with a mask (or, arguably, turning it into a mask) the figure is de-humanised and de-personalised.[358] The stylization allows for

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[358] See above: 120-121

recognition of it as human, but introduces a sense of disconcerting unfamiliarity in relation to the nature of the man in the context of the social world of the viewer.

Why it was considered necessary to represent the human form in a visual tradition that did not tend to such representations is a question that must be addressed, as well as the reasons lying behind its presentation as something 'separated' from the viewer, as a mask separates the wearer from the viewer. Several arguments could be suggested to explain why the 'man' in early Anglo-Saxon art is abstracted to this degree: why the artist, in distorting the image of the human figure has, in effect, de-emphasized the figure's humanity, allowing space for symbolic interpretation. It might be argued that, in doing so the very nature of the human motif in this context was to be transitional, suspended disconcertingly between human and something not quite human. The idea that the abstraction is due to any lack of skill or ability on the part of the craftsman is unsustainable given the sophisticated technical rendering, and its formulaic nature. It might, however, be argued that some stigma or fear was attached to depictions of the human form and so they were produced only rarely. Another argument, common in the scholarship on style and the abstraction of animal ornament in Germanic, pre-Christian art, is that the potency of the animal can be controlled or managed by breaking it down into mere pattern-like parts.[359] An analogous argument could be applied to the depiction of the human form: that by bearing the abstracted image of a warrior or a deity, the wearer can benefit from or protect themselves from the power of the gods or opponents in battle.

More convincing than either of these arguments, however, is the suggestion that by abstracting the humanity of the figure and highlighting certain aspects of the body which function as signifiers of masculinity – the exposed genitalia or implied nakedness, and the prominent facial hair – the 'man' is reduced to his essential masculinity. By focusing such

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[359] Leigh, 1980: 369– 430; 1984; Haseloff, 1981: 113– 114, 419– 420; Hines, 1997: 392– 393; Dickinson, 2002: 172– 175

images of masculinity on objects limited to male activity and male dress, the power of the masculine is, in effect, being represented physically, in terms of military capabilities and virility, and economically in terms of wealth.

With this in mind, it is possible to turn to consider the tendency in the scholarship to 'name the man', to suggest specific identities for him. In this mode of scholarship, most of the identifications have depended on literary associations, meaning that the material objects and their art have been viewed through the lens of texts not contemporary with those objects and their art; the result is a series of conclusions that must, of necessity, remain hypothetical. Attempts to identify the creatures flanking the man on the Sutton Hoo purse-lid, for instance, have been made, diversely naming them as bears, or lions or even dogs. Bruce-Mitford, trying to locate the grouping within the context of Germanic legend/saga, saw them as bears flanking the man, a motif for which he recognized parallels in Scandinavian art.[360] Roe, on the other hand, arguing for a Christian reference, explained them as lions flanking Daniel in the lions' den, drawing analogies with Frankish models.[361] And Adams,[362] following Hicks,[363] has suggested they might be identified as wolves or dogs and has drawn parallels with such disparate sources as Mediterranean artistic conventions and a Swedish helmet die. Such explanations clearly draw on expectations of what the creatures might signify, rather than their actual appearance, and the features that might distinguish them as a specific type of beast.

Recognising the debatable value of this method, other approaches have also been explored in order to articulate the symbolic significances of the human figure. Hicks, for instance, discussed the man-between-two-beasts motif on the Sutton Hoo purse lid as an attempt to rearticulate the motif of the 'dancing' men preserved on the helmet, noting the

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[360] Bruce-Mitford, 1978: 490
[361] Roe, 1945: 10; Schultz, 2001: 238
[362] Adams, 2004: 1-3; 2010: 96-98
[363] Hicks, 1993a: 68-69

possibility that it was regarded as an 'heirloom',[364] and therefore its iconography seen as both traditional and valued. The 'traditional' motifs on these 'heirloom' or antique objects were then used as a model by the seventh-century metalworkers and jewellers creating the rest of the regalia.[365] This echoing of subject is certainly apparent on the purse lid, which takes aspects of the decoration found on the heirloom shield boss.[366] The mask-like faces and flattened angular body positions found in the figural panels on the helmet are also recalled in the two plaques of the man-between-two-beasts. Hicks argues that this conscious echoing of the heirloom armament within the purse lid was intended as a statement about the person for whom the jewellery was produced, about his family, history and status.[367]

Whether this was indeed the case, it is worth noting that one of the more prevalent conventions among the depictions under consideration here is the horned helmet with bird-headed terminals worn by the spear-brandishing figures. These have inspired the suggestion that the figures depict those dedicated to, or emblematic of, Odin – or more accurately his Anglo-Saxon incarnation, Woden – a powerful figure in the Germanic pagan pantheon, associated with battles and death but also with protection and metamorphosis. [368] The association with Odin-Woden lies in the inclusion of the spears, Odin's weapon, [369] and the birds, also associated with him, [370] while the nudity of the figures, emphasized by the delineation of a penis, has led to comparisons with Scandinavian portrayals of naked warriors dedicated to Odin, although these lack

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[364] Bruce-Mitford, 1978: 224– 225; Hicks, 1993: 64– 70
[365] Chaney, 1970: 121– 50; Bruce- Mitford, 1978: 371; Hicks, 1993: 65
[366] See above: 80-82
[367] Hicks, 1993: 70
[368] Davidson, 1964: 25; 1967: 122; Bruce-Mitford, 1974: 200– 206; Wickham-Crowley, 1992: 48– 49
[369] In Norse mythology Odin is known for carrying a magical spear, *Gungnir*, crafted by dwarfs and said to never miss a target. It was thought that casting a spear into the opposing forces at the start of a battle was a way of invoking Odin's blessing; see Crossley-Holland, 1982: 51, 197; Lindow, 2002: 155
[370] Odin is said to have two raven companions, Huginn (thought) and Muninn (memory) who fly about and gather information for him. He is also known for being able to transform into an eagle; see Lindow, 2002: 186– 188

genitalia.[371] Furthermore, the figures on the Finglesham and Ayton buckles, and the Sutton Hoo helmet seem to be engaged in ritual activity, suggested both by the nudity of the Finglesham man, and the dancing pose of the warriors on the helmet.[372] It has thus been suggested that, in the case of the Finglesham buckle at least, the nude yet armed figure is a warrior dedicated to Odin, possessed by the ecstasy of the battle to come and protected only by his own belt buckle and devotion to the deity.[373] Whether the horned figures are priests engaged in shamanistic practices, supernatural emissaries, or warriors devoted to Odin or Woden, the images have been interpreted as referencing the presence and power of the deity.[374]

While the exact symbolic meaning of the decoration cannot be definitively ascertained, it could be suggested that, at the very least, the military nature of the helmeted, spear-bearing figures adorning these items of male personal wear imbues them with the role of symbolic guardians, lending them an apotropaic function. Together, the potential references to a supernatural guard, like Odin or Woden, the horned nature of the helmet with confronting bird heads, the spears, and the ritualistic nudity, seem to reinforce not only a potential 'religious' purpose, but also to enhance the potency of the protection they provide the wearer. The possible linking with Odin-Woden alongside the symbols of personal protection would certainly reinforce the apotropaic power of the symbols and support the suggestion that the decorative programmes for these objects were being chosen deliberately to act as amulets or talismans against evil or harm.

Alluring though such interpretations of the imagery might be, it is nevertheless problematic to view Anglo-Saxon art and see references to the pagan and the supernatural – if only because there is so little information about Anglo-Saxon paganism: its pantheon,

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[371] Chadwick Hawkes *et al*, 1965: 17– 30
[372] Chadwick Hawkes *et al*, 1965: 26– 27; Arent, 1969: 139– 141; Speidel, 2002: 107– 109
[373] Davidson, 1964: 26
[374] Wickham-Crowley, 1992: 52– 53

beliefs and rituals. Furthermore, the little material that does survive is preserved in place

names, genealogies, and names of deities found in later Old English literature or

inscriptions, meaning their potential reference points have to be inferred and cast back to

the seventh century.[375] Even so, these sources give barely more than the names of a few

gods; little is indicated about their nature or their associations.

Thus, in order to interpret the early Anglo-Saxon depictions of human figures,

scholars have turned to texts far removed from the Anglo-Saxons of the sixth and seventh

centuries.[376] As with the animal art, these include the works of Tacitus, writing critically of

the military leadership of Rome in the first century AD (to elevate the status of the

'barbarian' enemies of Rome), who describes the religious practices of the Germanic tribes

encountered by the Romans.[377] Accounts such as these are invoked to explain Anglo-

Saxon practices and beliefs despite the gap of centuries and geographical distance,[378]

raising questions of their 'accuracy' and 'value' in the context of post-Roman, Anglo-

Saxon England.[379] Another source commonly referenced is Scandinavian poetry of the

eleventh and twelfth centuries with its stories of the gods whose names are cognate with

those apparently current in sixth- and seventh-century Anglo-Saxon England.[380] As with

the accounts of Tacitus, these mythological sources are distanced by several centuries and

significant geographical location from early Anglo-Saxon culture.[381] Furthermore, the

poems were recorded within a Christianized society and so cannot be depended upon to

present an accurate portrayal of earlier, non-Christian cultures.[382] Likewise, Anglo-Saxon

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[375] Sisam, 1953: 287– 298; Branston, 1957: 29– 30; Gordon (trans.), 1962: 92– 93, 105– 108; Meaney, 1966: 110– 111; Wilson, 1992: 5– 43; Fellows-Jensen, 1995: 180– 186; North, 1997: 13; Macleaod and Mees, 2006: 127; Yorke, 2006: 250; Hooke, 2010: 49– 51; Higham and Ryan, 2013: 151
[376] Turville-Petre, 1964: 1– 34; Davidson, 1993: 84– 108; Williams, 2010; Carver, 2010: 5– 7
[377] Tacitus, *Germania*, 9– 10, 45, Birley, (trans.), 1999: 42– 3, 60– 1
[378] Chaney, 1970: 8– 17, 124; Stanley, 1975: 64– 65; Fanning, 2001
[379] Hawkes, 1997: 314– 315
[380] For more detailed discussion of Norse poetic mythology see: Turville-Petre, 1964; Orchard, 1997; Lindow, 2002
[381] Chaney, 1970: 38– 39; Wilson, 1992: 11; John, 1996: 23; Brooks, 1998: 24
[382] Bailey, 1980: 101– 103; Hawkes, 1992: 315

literature, such as Ælfric's (late tenth-century) homilies,[383] or Wulfstan's (eleventh-century) homilies, including *De Falsiis Dei*,[384] both of which post-date the pre-conversion period and are written from an anti-Scandinavian propagandistic viewpoint following a resurgence of pagan practice in Anglo-Saxon England, present unreliable accounts.[385] Finally, the Old English poem *Beowulf*, most commonly cited in discussions of the identity of human figures in Anglo-Saxon art, while preserving much about its apparently fifth-century oral origins, which lie in 'Geat-land' (near modern-day Denmark) rather than early Anglo-Saxon England, is likely contemporary with Ælfric's work in its written form and has been filtered through the lens of Christianization and altered or amended to serve Christian purpose.[386] All these sources, used to help illuminate specific early Anglo-Saxon pagan practices and deities such as Odin-Woden as opposed to more generalised observations about the animals already cited, are thus far removed from pre-conversion Anglo-Saxon England. They refer to different peoples, in different places, at different times, and for varied purposes. Invoking them to interpret early Anglo-Saxon art, and particularly its human subject-matter, is deeply problematic.

It might, therefore, be relevant to return to the very manner in which the human figures have been presented: to consider the fact that they have been 'de-humanised' through stylisation and awkward proportions, through the mask-like faces that remove any identity from the 'man'. As noted this 'dehumanisation' arguably serves a twofold purpose: to strip it down to its essential, anonymous, masculinity, which serves to present the man as an ideal male warrior, and to hide any expressions which might telegraph strategy or weakness to an opponent, or distance the wearer from their own humanity. In embodying the idealised 'man' however, the human figure adds a third layer of meaning

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[383] Ælfric, *Homilies*, in Godden (trans.), 2001
[384] Wulfstan, *Homilies*, in Bethurum (ed. and trans.), 1957: 221– 224
[385] Stanley, 1975: 14; North, 1997: 205– 7; Marsden, 2004: 203
[386] Whitelock, 1951: 85– 86; Foley, 1990: 34– 35; Frank, 1992: 123; Howe, 1997: 214– 216; Gwara, 2008: 100– 106

that allows the image to transition between representing the human, the dehumanised, or the superhuman and, it might be argued, embodying all three at once.

Thus, the human figures found in early Anglo-Saxon art may be understood to have functioned as symbols for masculinity itself, the image of a man abstracted and effaced so that focus is drawn to those aspects that makes a man: genitalia, facial hair, weaponry, wealth. Just as it has long been argued that there are symbolic attributes of the interlace and zoomorphs decorating Anglo-Saxon objects,[387] there are arguably attributes of masculinity that may have been deemed to have totemic or apotropaic properties for their bearer. By placing the essence of masculinity on the objects, the bearer is perhaps enhancing his own masculinity to capture the power that the idea of maleness would have held for a warrior-based society. It is therefore unnecessary to know whether the 'man' shown on Anglo-Saxon objects is Odin, or a warrior, or a shaman; it is sufficient to know that it is a 'man' in all his maleness, and the choice to depict the figure was both deliberate and exclusive for the bearer.

2.5 Gendering Iconography

Having examined the humans and zoomorphs traditional to early Anglo-Saxon art, it is necessary to consider the distinction that must be drawn between sex and gender in order to interpret them further. Although gender, in theory, depends on biological sex to determine the distinctions between the (predominantly) two groups, its constructed nature undermines any classification of gender based solely on sex.[388] Furthermore, gender is an on going construction throughout an individual's and a society's life, actively and continually being created and reinforced by that society.[389] Therefore, while sex is

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[387] Kitzinger, 1993: 3– 4
[388] Oakley, 1980: 158; Ortner and Whitehead, 1981: 1; Stoodley, 1999: 1
[389] Moore, 1986; 1988; Sørensen, 1992: 32; Lucy, 1998: 33

immutable, gender and its associated characteristics and roles can vary from society to society, playing a necessary part in the dynamics of reproduction and the maintenance of a societal structure.[390]

In assessing gender within past societies, it was commonly a matter of assessing the data in terms of a binary, a fixed pair of categories, based on biological sex.[391] This binary was constructed largely on the basis of predetermined gender roles, ideas about how males and females behave within their society.[392] However gender roles, and the societal boundaries that inform them, were no less complex in the past than they are today and in order to understand them they must analysed as more than just static categories.[393] Archaeologically, a burial can be sexed by one of two methods. Skeletal sexing is achieved by examination of the morphological features of the remains, primarily the pelvis and cranium,[394] and is most effective when applied to well-preserved adult skeletons.[395] A burial is also often sexed based on indications left by the mortuary practices, primarily, but not exclusively, the type of grave goods.[396] This secondary method is effective for a wider range of remains than skeletal analysis since it is not dependent on well-preserved subjects; however, it is more effectively an indication of gender than sex as mortuary practices are dictated by social customs.[397]

Interestingly, in Anglo-Saxon archaeology, where the two methods disagree, the determination of the gender of the burial was based upon the associated grave goods rather than the skeletal evidence.[398] This practice was based on the reductive conflation of sex

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[390] Moore, 1988: 25; Dommasnes, 1992: 1, 12; Sørensen, 1992: 32; Lucy, 1998: 33
[391] Hays-Gilpin and Whitley, 1998: 4-5; Stoodley, 1999: 2
[392] Conkey and Gero, 1991: 11; Hays-Gilpin and Whitley, 1998: 5-6; Stoodley, 1999: 2
[393] For comprehensive archaeological studies including gender as multidimensional see: Halsall, 1996; Gilchrist, 1997; 1999; Rega, 1997; Lucy, 1998; Stoodley, 1999
[394] Lucy, 1998: 33; Mays, 1998: 33
[395] Krogman, 1962; El-Najjar and McWilliams, 1978; Stewart, 1979; Molleson and Cox, 1993: 206; Lucy, 33-34
[396] Stoodley, 1999: 24
[397] Stoodley, 1999: 24
[398] Hirst, 1985: 33-34; Evison, 1987: 123; Lucy, 1998: 34

and gender as both binary and equivalent, in essence based on the idea that men had weapons and women wore jewellery. Recent scholarship has gone a long way to demonstrate the limitations of such a binary view of both sex and burial in the early medieval world.[399] Thus, despite concerns regarding the sexing of burials, gender determinations are now considered possible because there are decreed to be distinctions between the gender roles and the objects associated with them, differences that are observable within the material record.[400]

There are, of course, a number of objects found in grave assemblages that do not have strong gendered associations (for example knives or vessels), and which are found in burials for both sexes.[401] Recent studies have thus shown that gender in Anglo-Saxon burial was far more complex and nuanced than a simple binary, with evidence of transgression from burials of males with jewellery and females with weapons,[402] suggesting that more than biological sex was a factor in the creation of burial assemblages.[403] Despite these outliers and the resultant recent refinement of ideas about the role of gender in burial, the evidence shows that there are strong, if not exclusive, associations with one sex or the other for most items.[404]

It is with this in mind that it becomes possible to identify the gendered roles of certain types of objects; including brooches, pins, necklaces for females, or for example helmets, shields, sword fittings, buckles for males. In doing so, analysis of the iconography of such items, and therefore its potentially gendered associations, can be

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[399] The gender binary has been challenged by discussion of 'third sex' outliers such as hermaphrodites, homosexuals and eunuchs. Stoodley, 1999. For a comprehensive discussion of gender in Anglo-Saxon burial see: Lucy, 1998 and Stoodley, 1999

[400] For specific discussion of burials demonstrating gender disparity see Lucy, 1998: 48-49; Stoodley, 1999: 76-77

[401] Lucy, 2011: 690

[402] For discussion of the problems of gender identification in Anglo-Saxon burial see Lucy, 1997; 2011: 690. For examples of Anglo-Saxon males buried with jewellery see Lucy 2000: 89. For examples of Anglo-Saxon females associated with weapons see Stoodley, 1999: 76; see also Lucy, 2000: 89 and Walton Rogers, 2007: 198–199

[403] Lucy, 2011: 690

[404] Stoodley, 1999; Lucy, 2011: 692

undertaken, revealing further layers of meaning and significance in the decorative motifs used.

2.4a Zoomorphs and Gender Roles

Certainly, use of the human figures and many of the identifiable zoomorphs seem to be gender specific. Speake has posited that the same animal, such as the boar, could have different meanings in gendered contexts.[405] As already discussed, the image of a boar in Anglo-Saxon England has been understood to identify tribal affiliation, or it might have served as an amulet of fertility, or it might have signified a warrior's strength. The meaning of the symbol would be dependent on the function of the item it is decorating: so a boar on a sword would signify strength and victory in battle, while one appearing in association with a woman might resonate as a sign of protection and fertility.[406] In discussing such possibilities, however, some commentators, notably Speake, fail to differentiate between boar tusks and representations of boars on items such as the Sutton Hoo shoulder clasps.[407] Such discussions do not compare like with like, and the conclusions drawn are not entirely convincing, given the different nature of the objects.

Using the boar as an example it is possible to see clearly gendered use of the imagery in early Anglo-Saxon England. First it must be noted that there is a distinction between a physical fragment of a boar, namely a bone or tusk, and the image of it, although the use of both seems indicative of the cultural significance of the boar. A number of boar tusks have been found in Anglo-Saxon graves dating from the fifth to the seventh centuries, often perforated in order to be suspended.[408] An example of this can be

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[405] Speake, 1980: 78-81
[406] Speake, 1980: 78-81; Wilson, 1992: 109; Hicks, 1993a: 24-25; Hawkes, 1997: 315-316
[407] Speake, 1980: 78-81; Wilson, 1992: 100-101; Sykes, 2011: 327-335
[408] Meaney, 1981: 131

seen on the necklace found in Grave 27 at Wheatley in Oxfordshire (Fig. 2.128),[409] which

has a perforated boar's tusk (as well as two canine teeth and two Roman coins)[410]

suspended between its beads.[411] Boar tusks are found overwhelmingly in female grave

contexts, the exceptions being two early sixth-century graves at Stowting in Kent,[412] and

Kemp Town in Sussex.[413] However given the early date of the excavations, both in the

nineteenth century, and the lack of specificity recorded about the finds, the male

designations are a point of uncertainty making the relevance of these two boar tusks less

clear.[414] Given the predominantly female setting of these objects, they are commonly

thought to have been used as amulets, perhaps for protection of the dead,[415] or in life to

promote fertility.[416]

Returning to the artistic depictions of boars in Anglo-Saxon England, it has been

argued here that the motif held significant meaning within that culture, although the exact

connotations are unknown, and was incorporated into decorative programs as a symbolic

or apotropaic component. This holds true regardless of the gender of the wearer or bearer,

so it must be asked if there was any distinct variation within the depiction of the

iconographic trope dependent on the gender role of the object that bore it. All the boar

imagery discussed earlier was in the context of masculine objects, weaponry and

armament. The motif was depicted both as full bodied animals, as on the helmet crests and

the shoulder clasps, and isolated heads, on the helmet terminals.

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[409] Ashmolean Museum, AN1883.69a
[410] For discussion of coins and their reuse as jewellery see Chapter 1: 41-45
[411] Leeds, 1917; Meaney, 1981: 135; MacGregor and Bolick, 1993
[412] Brent, 1883: 85
[413] Meaney, 1964: 251; Speake, 1980: 79
[414] Wilson, 1992:108-109
[415] Speake, 1980: 79
[416] Meaney, 1981:131-135; MacGregor, 1995: 108; Gilchrist, 2012: 167

A minute, early seventh-century silver gilt knob found near Brantingham in Yorkshire also displays the isolated boar's head motif (Fig. 2.129).[417] Originally part of a radiate-headed brooch, a type of brooch common as part of female Anglo-Saxon dress, from the fifth through the seventh century as well as on the Continent where it originated,[418] the knob would have been one of a number attached by rods to the brooch head-plate. The depiction of the animal head is very schematic with slanted oval eyes and a flattened snout with two small protrusions, indicating tusks, at each side. A similar object also made of silver-gilt and dating from the late-sixth or early-seventh century was found in Lincolnshire (Fig. 2.130).[419] The knob is worn but the decoration is still clear and the shape of the tusks pointing up from either side of the animal's snout is more visible. Despite the brevity of the form, the key signifiers of the boar motif are included in both cases and allow for the animal to be identified as a boar.

A similar distribution of the type of depiction can be observed among objects bearing bird imagery. Complete birds and bird heads appear on masculine objects, on helmets, shields,[420] and buckles, but only the heads of birds are found on items of female jewellery.[421] In a female context, therefore, the use of an image seemingly indicative of aggression and violence might suggest an attempt to use the attributes of that creature in an apotropaic way. A predatory bird in that context is not the embodiment of the wearer's ideal qualities but instead may have afforded protection against threat.[422] The fish similarly has a prominent place on masculine objects, especially shields,[423] but only

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[417] PAS, YORYM-863289
[418] Owen-Crocker, 2004: 39-40
[419] PAS, NLM-399C73
[420] For a more complete discussion of the distribution of avian shield mount fittings see Dickinson, 2005: 133-135
[421] See earlier discussion: 89-90
[422] Meaney, 1981: 162-168; Hines, 1997a: 393
[423] For a more complete discussion of the distribution of piscine shield mount fittings see Dickinson, 2005: 127-133

appears rarely on items of distinctly feminine use and in those contexts it appears not on its own but as part of a predator-and-prey image.[424]

A horse-head motif (as opposed to the full-body type) also appears on cruciform brooches found in female graves of the fifth and sixth centuries, but as noted it seems to disappear by the seventh century.[425] Conversely the horse-head does not seem to have been used on masculine objects,[426] although the full-bodied horse, where it can be comfortably identified, is found on items associated with masculine roles, the Sutton Hoo shield (armament) and purse-lid (status and wealth) respectively. Given this dichotomy, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the horse might have had some attributes that would be more appropriate to a woman, and that those attributes might be different, embodied in the image of a head, from those that might be embodied in the image of the full body of a horse, and found on male objects. The attributes embodied by the horse, in life, would remain constant but the selection of the type of horse image and its placement on a gendered object would dictate which set of significances the horse, and by extension the wearer, evoked.[427]

Images of the anonymous zoomorphs and of serpents, on the other hand, are found on both male and female items. As noted, these two categories of animal ornament are notoriously difficult to understand in terms of potential symbolic significances and instead

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[424] See earlier discussion: 90-92

[425] Stoodley, 1999: 137; Owen-Crocker, 2004: 39-40; Gowland, 2006: 148; Walton Rogers, 2007: 167, 171

[426] The attribution of the so-called 'horse head' terminals in the Staffordshire hoard is extremely suspect given the lack of representational signifiers. Without these key depictive conventions, identification of a zoomorph as one type or another is highly problematic. For the purposes of this study, the terminals are considered zoomorphic but lack enough visual information to differentiate them further.

[427] Most brooches, especially cruciform brooches, are associated with female use and female burial in Anglo-Saxon England (Stoodley, 1999: 75; Owen-Crocker, 2004: 36-38; Walton Rogers, 2007:113-121), although men did sometimes use single, circular brooches to fasten a cloak over the shoulder, laces or clasps appear to be more common. (Owen-Crocker, 2004: 106-110). Brooches seem not to have formed a significant part of Anglo-Saxon male dress despite the common practice of using pennanular and pseudo-pennanular brooches as male status objects in contemporary Celtic or later Scandinavian-influenced societies (Wilson, 1984: 117-118; Warner, 1988: 38; Owen-Crocker, 2004: 200-233; Laing, 2006: 153-154), and later depictions of men wearing large brooches to secure their cloaks, as seen, for example on the Franks Casket (Webster and Backhouse, 1991: 101–103, cat. no. 70; Owen-Crocker, 2004: 78-88; Webster, 2012: 97-98)

seem to have been intended to create visual confusion and a concomitant focus on the pattern. Therefore, the appearance of this type of imagery on both male and female objects is perhaps best considered as deliberately ambiguous, and possibly signifying something universal that transcends gendered purposes, be it protection from harm, contemplation of the mysterious, or something that modern frames of reference no longer accommodate.

This analysis (albeit brief) has illustrated that certain animal forms are only found on male objects, whereas other aspects of animal imagery are only found on female objects, while some types of zoomorphic ornament appear on objects related to both genders. There must have been a reason that certain animal forms were considered appropriate for males, while others were reserved for females.[428] This custom of gender specific use also suggests that certain types of imagery, while depicting the same animal, might evoke different meanings on a male object or a female object. For example, the attributes of an animal in its complete form, such as a boar, that would be appealing for a warrior to invoke – strength, speed and viciousness – may have been deemed less appropriate for a woman in her different societal role.[429]

This separation between specific types of depiction of the animal is distinctive to Anglo-Saxon England. Compared with contemporary continental material, the gendered distinctions between full-length and truncated depictions of zoomorphs appear to be absent. Women in Merovingian Gaul, Ostrogothic and Lombard Italy and elsewhere in the Germanic world, wore pairs of full-length bird brooches from the mid-fifth until the end of the sixth century.[430] Fibulae in the form of horses and fish are found across Frankia.[431] Even the horse-and-rider, a motif inclusive of the full-body man, can be found on

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[428] Stoodley, 1999: 118, 136-140
[429] La Fontaine, 1978: 1; Conkey and Spector, 1984: 2; Barrett, 1988: 13; Wylie, 1991: 37; Lucy, 1998: 102
[430] Speake, 1980: 81-85; Hicks, 1986: 153-158; Whitfield, 1993: 122; Reynolds Brown, 1995: 43-44; Reynolds Brown *et al*, 2000: 237-241. For examples of these types of artefacts see 47-56. See also Thiry, 1939; Arrhenius, 1971; 1985
[431] For examples of these types of artefacts see: 53-61. See also Thiry, 1939; Arrhenius, 1971; 1985

continental female apparel as well as on male armament.[432] This disparity indicates that, in Anglo-Saxon England, specific choices were being made as to which aspects of the animal were considered appropriate or beneficial to each sex.

Conversely, other than the horse-head motif, which had fallen out of favour by the seventh century, there was apparently no image that was considered 'specifically' female and found only on female jewellery and objects, but there does seem to have been a tendency to depict only the head of a specific animal on female objects rather than the whole body. The heads of birds, boars, horses and humans are found on brooches and pendants, arguably allowing for a different set of symbolic significances, either by their truncated appearance or by their female contexts. The predatory bird, boar, horse and fish, however, are all found both as full-length and truncated head-only depictions on male specific objects. These animals are also all powerful creatures, in their own sphere, with some association with male pursuits, be it hunting, warfare, or predatory behaviour. The reason for these types of animals used to ornament male objects may simply be that aggressive, powerful creatures were considered appropriate ornament for warriors.[433] However, such a simplistic reading ignores the role that religion and ritual beliefs may have played in the life of an Anglo-Saxon warrior and ignores the symbolism that seems to have been part of the complex meaning of this type of animal ornament as well as their gender specific role.[434]

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[432] For examples of these types of artefacts see: 53-61. See also Thiry, 1939; Arrhenius, 1971; 1985

[433] Härke, 1992: 165; Gilchrist, 1997: 47-50; Lucy, 1997; Stoodley, 1999: 48-49; Dickinson, 2005:160

[434] It is unlikely that this gender specific distribution is accidental, given the number of demonstrably female objects that have survived in the form of brooches, necklaces, and often keys in counterpoint to more masculine objects like shoulder clasps, buckles, and armament. For examples of the types of gendered grave goods found in Anglo-Saxon England, see: Avent, 1975; Youngs, 1989; Webster and Backhouse, 1991. For more extensive discussion of the gendering of burials and grave goods in early Anglo-Saxon England, see: Pader, 1980; 1982; Bush, 1988; Geake, 1992; Lucy, 1997; 2000; Gilchrist, 1999; Stoodley, 1999; Taylor, 2001

There are, of course, outliers to this gendered binary of the iconography. The boar figurine found at Guilden Morden,[435] thought to originally be a helmet crest, was excavated from a female grave.[436] Similarly a number of shield fittings have also been found in female graves despite originally being objects with strong masculine associations.[437] This re-use of male objects in female contexts suggests that the original social status and protective aspects of the shield could be transferred, at least in part, for female use of the reused ornament.[438] A similar process of shifting male associations into a female context can be traced in iconography as well, as with the use of the horse-and-rider motif on bracteates and brooches (Fig. 1.126),[439] or the use of horned helmeted heads as pendants.[440] Alternatively a transference of the qualities may have been invoked: disc or saucer shaped pendants and brooches mimic a shield's shape, and so may have been symbolic of shields.[441] This symbolic visual borrowing from unequivocally masculine objects into female jewellery items is argued to date back to the designs of late Roman army shields,[442] making the practice ingrained tradition by the seventh century. The reuse of fragmentary male armament in female contexts strongly implies, however, that the association, although traditional, had not lost its significance.

No analysis of the gendered imagery can be complete without mentioning the emphatically masculine imagery found in early Anglo-Saxon England. The male image permeates the artistic milieu, although it predominates only as an isolated head form on feminine objects such as brooches into the seventh century.[443] These full-length human figures are depicted with obvious male attributes: bare-chested with genitalia delineated or

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[435] For discussion of the boar figurine see above: 66-67
[436] Foster, 1977: 166-167; Halsall, 2003: 170-171
[437] Dickinson, 2005: 162
[438] Dickinson, 2005: 162-163; Fern, 2005: 46
[439] Quast, 2009: 334-336
[440] Helmbrecht, 2007: 166; Quast, 2009: 334
[441] Meaney, 1981: 162-168; Hines, 1997a: 393
[442] Inker, 2003: 117-119; Dickinson, 2005: 163
[443] Dickinson, 2009; Brundle, 2013: 213

otherwise suggested; beard and moustache; weaponry and armament. Furthermore, it seems that the settings of these human forms were, like the figures themselves, also the result of considered decisions. In Anglo-Saxon England, the full human figure only appears on objects that are distinctly male: belt buckles, helmets, and a purse lid. These objects would have been worn or handled primarily by men: a belt buckle could have fastened his sword belt; a helmet would have been worn as part of his armour; and a purse would have held his (symbolic) wealth.[444] The use of the full male human form on only male objects, in conjunction with its conspicuous absence from female accoutrements, strongly suggests a process of deliberate choice, and so must have been significant to those responsible for their selection and production. In contrast the use of the isolated head on female objects, following the tendencies observed in the representation of the other zoomorphs, where only the head is featured, seems to be a common trend resulting from some sense of gendered significance.

Regardless of such considerations, the role of gender in both the choice of decoration on an object as well as the potential function and meaning it might have to a contemporary bearer or viewer, clearly falls into a deliberate pattern. The zoomorphic iconography held multivalent meaning that was, partially, indicated by a gendered choice of its form. Certain types of ornament were reserved solely for objects with intended male use, the full body depiction, while others, the truncated head, were acceptable in both male and female context, but perhaps with different symbolic significance. There was clearly a distinction being made by the Anglo-Saxon society between imagery appropriate for men and that appropriate for women, defined by their gender roles within that society.

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[444] For further discussion, see Geake, 1992; 1997; Hedeager, 1992; Richards, 1992; Lucy, 2000; Taylor, 2001

2.6 Introduction of an Invader

> In Christian conversion, the missionary is an instrument of diffusion, but need not be the inevitable agent of the faith.[445]

These words from Carver's introduction to *The Cross Goes North* explain that a mission spreads knowledge and familiarity of the alien, in this case a new religion, Christianity, but does not necessarily cause conversion to the new religion, at least not directly. The arrival of the Augustinian papal mission in Kent at the end of the sixth century proved a significant turning point for Anglo-Saxon England, marking the beginning of what is known as the age of conversion.[446] The following century saw the political wrangling, territorial disputes, and power mongering that typified Anglo-Saxon culture cast in Christian and non-Christian terms as well.[447] However the Christianisation of Anglo-Saxon England also represents a dialogue between Germanic and sub-Roman, Mediterranean traditions.

The sentiment expressed by Carver holds true for cultural transmission as well as religious diffusion. The Christian mission spread more than just the teachings of Christianity; it brought with it the cultural trappings of the sub-Roman world, out of which the Church had emerged. It brought the Latin language, literacy, bureaucratic hierarchies, building in stone, and, most importantly for the purposes of this study, an aesthetic and modes of artistic representation shaped by the world of late antiquity. These cultural imports were, for the most part, distinct from the Germanic traditions that had informed Anglo-Saxon society for centuries: the Old English language, runic script, oral society, tribal organisation, building in wood, and use of traditional patterned motifs and artistic decoration. The seventh century, the period when the art discussed was produced and

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[445] Carver, 2003: 11
[446] Hillgarth, 1969: 150; Stenton, 1971: 104-105; Campbell, 1986: 23-35; Mayr-Harting, 1991: 50; Higham, 1995: 19-20; 1997: 56; Fletcher, 1997: 116-117; Kirby, 2000: 28; Blair, 2005: 24-25; Charles-Edwards, 2003: 104
[447] Higham, 1997: 190-191; Cusack, 1998: 101

displayed, was therefore marked by a dialogue between two disparate cultures, separate (although not isolated from) the religious changes.

This dialogue did not, however, spring from a vacuum. Prior to the Germanic settlement of the fifth century,[448] Britannia had been a Roman colony with a flourishing Mediterranean-influenced culture and on-going contact with the Roman world.[449] This period of Roman tenure had left its mark on the land, both physically, on the landscape,[450] and culturally, on the population.[451] Throughout the Anglo-Saxon period there were strong connections, economically and politically, between emergent Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and continental neighbours.[452] These relationships offered points of contact between the traditionally Germanic Anglo-Saxons and sub-Roman mores of the wider world seen in social customs and imported artefacts.[453]

By the late-sixth and seventh century, this sub-Roman culture was indelibly tied to Christianity and this, in turn, bore the influence of its classical and late antique roots.[454] It was a culture imbued in the history, traditions, and practices of the Roman, Mediterranean world. This influence would have been particularly present in the visual arts and modes of representation associated with Christianity which arose primarily from classical motifs appropriated and recast for Christian purpose.[455] In this way the Christian mission, and the transmission of Christian art, was the guise in which Roman cultural values were re-disseminated in Anglo-Saxon England.

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[448] Esmonde-Cleary, 1991: 39-41; Salway, 1993: 465; Fletcher, 1999: 107
[449] Salway, 1993: 83-91; Jones, 1996: 56
[450] Esmonde-Cleary, 1991:112-115; Salway, 1993: 345-349; Charles-Edwards, 2003: 1-11
[451] Snyder, 1998: 217-226; Charles-Edwards, 2003; Howe, 2004: 149
[452] Arnold, 1988: 102; Huggett, 1988: 92-93; Yorke, 1990: 18; 2006: 77; Dickinson, 1992: 114-115; Hines, 1992: 315-326; Campbell, 2007: 61
[453] Whitelock, 1976: 65-66, 232-235; Campbell, 1982: 22-44; Campbell, 1992: 93; Schoenfeld and Schulman, 1992: 21; Alcock, 1997: 208-209; Huggett, 1988; Williams, 2001: 63-64
[454] Carver, 2003: 12
[455] For discussion of this see e.g.: Grabar, 1968; Grant, 1995; Elsner, 1998; Lowden, 1998, Matthews, 1999

2.6a The Cross

Having considered in some detail the art traditional to the Anglo-Saxons and its

articulation in the seventh century which, as noted,[456] was a period of transition, it is

possible to turn, in closing, to examine the way in which Germanic and Mediterranean

decorative impulses were in dialogue in the region at this time. Given the potentially

extensive nature of such a study, the focus here will be limited to the most archetypal

motif of the incoming religious culture: the cross of the Christian church. The initial

Augustinian mission and later pilgrimages by Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastics were recorded as

bringing objects into England that had Christian imagery, including figures and narrative

scenes, depicted in a late antique or classical style.[457] In addition to objects bearing figures

and naturalistic scenes, the use of Christian symbols, especially the cross, had become a

common and perhaps preferred way to identify and ornament an object with Christian

associations at that time.

However the cross might have been a familiar pattern prior to the widespread

adoption of Christianity in England and therefore might not necessarily have indicated

adherence to the Christian faith.[458] Due to its simplicity of form, two crossed lines, it

appears as ornament pre-dating the advent of Christianity; after all cross shapes can be

perceived whenever linear ornament intersects at right angles, or four points of ornamental

focus are placed around a circular perimeter. The cross shape without obvious religious

significance was part of both Mediterranean and Germanic artistic traditions.

In Anglo-Saxon England a number of objects bearing cruciform ornament have

been found dating to the fifth and sixth centuries, predating the official Christian missions

to England, which might be deemed to represent evidence of residual Christianity

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[456] See Chapter 1: 24
[457] Bede, *HE* I. 25: Fertur autem, quia adpropinquantes ciuitati more suo cum cruce sancta et imagine magni regis Domini nostril Iesu Christi (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 74-75); Bede, *H. Abb*. 6, (Plummer, 1896: 368-370); Meyvaert, 1979: 63-77; O'Reilly, 2003: 144; Hawkes, 2007a
[458] Hoggett, 2010: 108-109

surviving from Roman times; however they are more likely to have been presentations of ornamental geometric forms without religious associations. A fifth-century gilt copper-alloy saucer brooch found in Merton, near London (Fig. 2.131),[459] bears chip-carved floriated ornament in a cross shape with double spirals at each terminal. A similar design is seen on a sixth-century copper-alloy saucer brooch excavated from Grave 186 at Long Wittenham in Oxfordshire (Fig. 2.132).[460] This brooch has a double cruciform formed by quadripartite division of the design, crossing at the centre both through the linear dividing ridges and the floriated arms. A different interpretation of cross-shaped ornament can be seen on a gold-plated, silver-backed disc brooch dated to the sixth century and found in Wingham, Kent (Fig. 2.133).[461] This has a niello border and a central, circular garnet and glass cloisonné element with four triangular cloisonné points, forming a cross shape, on a gold filigree field. A second cross shape can be seen in the five shell bosses, set in each of the spaces between the cloisonné shapes and at the centre of the circular ornament. These examples all bear cruciform decoration that is immediately identifiable upon viewing; however, it is embedded into the decorative scheme as opposed to being depicted in isolation. This lack of priority given to the cross-shape suggests that it was not a significant element of the ornament in its own right.

Artefacts bearing similar types of cruciform-inclusive ornament have also been found dating throughout the seventh century. A relatively simple version of the motif can be seen on a seventh-century gold disc pendant bordered with a frame of doubled beaded wire found at King's field cemetery in Kent (Fig. 2.134).[462] The motif is formed by four triangular garnet cloisonné arms around a large round central setting, now empty, on a background of filigree double spirals or spiral "hearts.. A round copper-alloy mount of the

[459] British Museum, 1923,0507.1
[460] British Museum, 1862,0613.99
[461] British Museum, 1879,0524.34
[462] British Museum, .1137.'70

same date, found in North Yorkshire (Fig. 2.135),[463] bears a slightly more prominent version of the cruciform decoration. It is decorated with an equal armed cross with curving, expanded terminals, a double ring at the centre, and interlace decoration filling the arms. Crosses also appeared in multiples within decorative schemes, as seen in the ornament of two seventh-century belt fittings. A copper-alloy belt buckle from Breach Down, Kent dated to the late-seventh century has two openwork crosses (Fig. 2.136),[464] one with squared terminals and the other with rounded ones, on a field of punched rings. A comparable scheme can be seen on a small, seventh-century, silver rectangular mount (Fig. 2.137),[465] thought to be part of a buckle, found near Bury St Edmunds. The mount has two incised crosses, one with square and the other with rounded terminals, both set within an incised frame and border of dots.

With such objects produced in the transitional period of the seventh century, it would seem that reading a cross shape as a Christian symbol was a matter of context for the viewer. The cruciform ornamentation is plainly visible but it is only given symbolic meaning within the appropriate context. If a wearer or viewer possessed knowledge of that context, namely Christianity, the traditional motif could take on new significance. If the contextual knowledge were absent then the use of the cruciform shape would represent a continued use of the traditional decorative aesthetic. Nevertheless, with the spread of Christianity and Christian teaching over the course of the seventh century, it is likely that the association between a cross shape and Christian meaning would have become more firmly linked in the mind of an Anglo-Saxon.

Alongside this tradition of incorporating cruciform decoration into ornamental programs arose a new variation which isolated the cross form and placed decoration upon

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[463] PAS, SWYOR-77FBD7
[464] British Museum, 1879,0524.54
[465] PAS, SF-B236E4

it. It might be argued that prioritising the physical shape of the cross was a way of granting it symbolic significance, giving it a primacy it lacked when it was incorporated as decoration on other forms. This refocusing on the cross shape in the seventh century may be a response to the growing influence of Christian teachings or wider exposure to the type of Mediterranean artwork and representational forms that accompanied those teachings, but it is impossible to definitively draw any direct correlation.

The isolated cross forms appear primarily on pendants and mounts. The pendants are commonly thought to be pectoral crosses, designed to be worn on a longer necklace which suspended the cross shape over the wearer's chest,[466] although a fashion for wearing pendants on shorter necklaces did emerge in the course of the seventh century, arguably as a result of Frankish influence.[467] The gold bullae necklace found in Desborough, Northamptonshire and dated to the second half of the seventh century provides one example of such a necklace (Fig. 2.138).[468] It is ornamented with an alternating pattern of gold bullae and cabochon garnet pendants with a small gold cross pendant set with a small cabochon garnet at the centre. Although this necklace is a higher quality exemplar of the type found in burials dating from the seventh century, the cross is generally considered to be among the earliest overtly Christian artefacts in Anglo-Saxon England and seems to represent a statement of personal belief.[469]

A small copper-alloy cross pendant dated to the seventh century from the Breach Down cemetery shows an increased level of complexity within the cross form (Fig. 2.139),[470] being more akin to the shape embedded in the copper-alloy mount discussed above. The cross has a central disc with four equal length arms with slightly expanding

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[466] Neuman de Vegvar, 2008: 105-106
[467] Owen-Crocker, 2004: 143-146
[468] British Museum, 1876,0504.1. Meaney and Hawkes, 1970: 37, 47, 54; Evans, 1991: 29, cat. no. 13; Webster and Backhouse, 1991: 28-29 cat. no. 13l; Archibald *et al*, 1997: 233, cat. no. 87; Owen-Crocker, 2004: 145
[469] Hoggett, 2010: 111; Karkov, 2011: 97-99
[470] British Museum, 1879,0524.62

terminals ornamented with a ring and dot motif. The simplicity of the ornamentation reinforces the primacy of the cross form while underlying the reinterpreted role of the cross-shape in a wider decorative scheme. Another pendant cross (Fig. 2.140),[471] found in a grave near Ixworth, Suffolk, is dated to the mid-seventh century and therefore presents a slightly later and more elaborate iteration of the form.[472] Like the Breach Down version, this cross has four equal length arms springing from a central roundel, but is made from gold and completely decorated with garnet cloisonné: the pattern is formed and enhanced by the deliberate variation in tone of the garnets used. The central cloisons are thinner than those used for the border and the backing foils seem to be stamped with a variety of patterns;[473] the resulting variations in colour emphasize the cross-shaped pattern which results. Again, the isolation of the cross shape, ornamented with elaborate geometric pattern on the Ixworth pendant, as opposed to the simplicity of the other two examples, implies that the cross was more legible and potent a signifier by the time it was created.

Further examples of the simplicity of the cross form can be seen in three completely unembellished versions of the motif. Two unadorned gold foil crosses (Fig. 2.141),[474] were found in the late seventh-century burial at Prittlewell, Essex.[475] The foils are shaped like Latin crosses with expanded terminals on each of the three short arms, but have no clear means to be mounted or worn and so are thought to have been part of the burial costume of the decedent buried there. These are, to date, unique in Anglo-Saxon England although gold foil crosses are common in burial context in Alemannic and Lombard territories on the continent.[476] However most of the continental crosses dating to the sixth and seventh centuries are heavily decorated, often with Christian scenes and

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[471] Ashmolean Museum, AN1909.453
[472] Webster and Backhouse, 1991: 26-27
[473] Webster and Backhouse, 1991: 26-27
[474] Museum of London, MOLA
[475] Blair *et al*, 2004; Geake, 2004; Higham and Ryan, 2013: 123
[476] Blair *et al*, 2004; Geake, 2004; Higham and Ryan, 2013: 123

symbols.[477] Plain gold foil crosses do appear, although much more rarely, in the southern

Lombard region of Italy, contemporary to the Prittlewell crosses.[478] A similarly unadorned

gold sheet cross pendant was found in North Yorkshire and has been dated anywhere from

the seventh to the tenth century but here it forms a pendant (Fig. 2.142).[479] It is completely

plain, shaped as an equal-armed cross with curved, expanded terminals and a hole punched

through the end of one arm for suspension. It may be comparable to Merovingian parallels

of unadorned cross-shaped jewellery,[480] but it may also have been intended as a burial item

which was refashioned as a pendant. A comparable silver pendant (Fig. 2.143),[481] more

securely dated to the seventh century, was excavated from Grave 187 at Butler's Field,

Lechlade, Gloucestershire. Like the gold pendant it is equal-armed with expanded, curved

terminals but has a square center with a round discoloration that may indicate some sort of

inset or mount that has been lost. The simplicity of their design, their inclusion in burial

assemblages, and their associations with continental burials have led to the suggestion that

they are indications, perhaps even deliberate statements, of Christian faith.[482]

The cross form appears to be a gender-neutral motif in Anglo-Saxon jewellery,

appearing on items for both men and women, although there is some indication that there

were difference in the way they were worn. For example, the Desborough cross (Fig.

2.138), discussed above,[483] is worn on a shorter necklace which forms a kind of jewelled

collar with pendants suspended from it, which seems analogous to continental necklaces

from the sixth and seventh centuries, suggesting that the style of jewellery was influenced

by Germanic exemplars,[484] which in turn had ultimately Byzantine or classical

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[477] Todd, 1992: 235-236; Reynolds Brown, 1995: 36; Hedeager, 2011: 96
[478] Fuchs Owen-Crocker, 2004: 313-314
[479] PAS, YORYM-FAD886
[480] Bierbrauer, 2003: 434, fig. 27.3: 4
[481] Corinium Museum, 1997.25.187.6
[482] Blair, 2005: 230-233; Owen-Crocker, 2011: 107-109; Welch, 2011: 271
[483] See above: 154
[484] Mazo-Karras, 1985: 159-177; Owen-Crocker, 1990: 95; Webster and Backhouse, 1991: cat. no. 13

prototypes.[485] Similar necklaces with cross-shaped or cross-decorated pendants have been found in other female seventh-century graves throughout Kent, as in grave 39 in Barfreston or grave 93 in Boss Hall, Ipswitch, and even up in Yorkshire,[486] suggesting that this style of small cross on shorter necklace was fashionable for women in seventh-century Anglo-Saxon England.[487] Alternatively a small gold cross (Fig. 2.146),[488] 3.5cm across, inlaid with garnets, was found at the neck of a woman in a bed-burial at Trumpington in Cambridge, which, although not yet fully published, has been dated to the mid-seventh century.[489] Originally attached to the neckline of her garment or a length of fabric worn around her neck, by means of loops on the back, the equal armed cross with expanded terminals was set with rectangular garnet cloisonné and a cabochon garnet at the central terminal.[490] A pectoral cross, so called to indicate that the cross fell at chest level, in Anglo-Saxon England was larger than these two examples and was usually suspended from a pendant loop however the length of the necklaces most pectoral crosses were suspended from is unknown.[491] Such a cross was found with the remains of St Cuthbert,[492] suggesting that the style was appropriate for, but not necessarily limited to Anglo-Saxon men, at least those of religious service, however the provenance of the cross is somewhat uncertain and it is not clear if it was buried with him or placed in the tomb at some point after his burial.[493]

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[485] For further discussion of the Byzantine/classical influence on Germanic jewellery see Chapter 3: 171-173
[486] Chadwick Hawkes and Grove, 1963; Webster and Backhouse, 1991: cat. no. 13
[487] Owen-Crocker, 1990: 95
[488] University of Cambridge
[489] Dickens and Lucy, 2012; bed burials, usually indicative of a high-status woman, are extremely rare in Anglo-Saxon England and almost exclusively limited to the seventh century (Williams, 2006: 31; Sherlock and Simmons, 2008a; 2008b). Some other notable seventh-century Anglo-Saxon bed burials were discovered at Cherry, Hinton, Cambridgeshire (Geake, 1997: 147), Edix Hill near Barrington, Cambridgeshire (Geake, 1997: 147; Williams, 2003: 100-103), Wiltshire, Street house near Loftus, Yorkshire (Sherlock, 2012: 89-100), and Swallowcliffe Down, Wiltshire, (Speake, 1989)
[490] Dickens and Lucy, 2012
[491] Owen-Crocker, 2004: 145
[492] For discussion of St Cuthbert's cross see Chapter 3: 177-178
[493] Battiscombe, 1956: 17; Bruce-Mitford, 1956: 308-325; Coatsworth, 1989: 287-288; Owen-Crocker, 1990: 95-96, 2004: 26

The isolation and eventual dominance of the cross as the decorative focus of personal, ornamental metalwork throughout the seventh century unsurprisingly indicates that the Christian associations with the cross were being continually reinforced until it had become the preeminent symbol of the religion within Anglo-Saxon England. In all cases the cross is clearly displayed as the focus of the decoration and so provides unequivocal examples of the growing influence of Christian and therefore Mediterranean inspired ornamentation. In a Christian, Anglo-Saxon context, even the simple act of making the sign of the cross was thought to offer tremendous apotropaic power, shielding someone against a multitude of evils.[494] A physical embodiment of that cross, worn on the body, would likewise be considered a potent symbol.

Tellingly, one of the first items said to have been brought by Augustine to his official first meeting with the Anglo-Saxons was a processional cross.[495] Given its prominence in the material culture of the early church, it is likely that the symbol of the cross was subsequently highlighted in Anglo-Saxon England by both teaching and visual display as the sign of Christianity. A significantly larger gold cross than those discussed thus far was discovered as part of the Stafforshire Hoard (Fig, 2.144).[496] Given its size, approximately 15.25cm high and 7.6cm across if unfolded,[497] and the extravagance of its ornamentation, with five associated fittings for garnets or other stones, it was intended for public display and use, mounted either on an altar or a staff for use in processions. The form of this cross remains similar to that of the other crosses already considered, with a central roundel and four equal-length arms with expanded terminals springing from it. The mounts, two of which retain garnet insets, would have been set at the central roundel and each of the terminals. The lower cross arm is extended past the stone-set terminal,

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[494] Johnson, 2006: 81
[495] Bede, *HE* I.25 (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969: 72-77)
[496] BMAG, 2010.0138K0655
[497] Leahy and Bland, 2009; Dean *et al*, 2010: 139-152; Karkov, 2011: 102-103

tapering inward to meet a D-shaped plate, set with a garnet, and mounting fixture, where

the cross would have been mounted onto whatever structure it was originally part of, and

giving the cross a Latinate appearance from a distance. The three upper arms of the cross

have small (animal-like) 'ears' affixed to the roundels, although similar metal bead

flourishes thought to imitate pearls are found on Syrian crosses,[498] nevertheless they give

the terminals a zoomorphic aspect.[499]

   The arms of the cross, as well as the base mount, are filled with incised interlacing

zoomorphs (Fig. 2.145).[500] The zoomorphs are significantly abstracted and lack any

distinguishing signifiers apart from their legs and paws, marking them as anonymous

zoomorphs rather than serpents. This melding of a new, Christian, Mediterranean form

with traditional Germanic ornament might seem incongruous but can be interpreted as

articulating an attempt to reconcile two disparate visual cultures, making what might seem

alien more familiar. Alternatively, as recent scholarship has argued,[501] the placement of

anonymous wild beasts on this cross might be an attempt to reinterpret one of the central

motifs of early Christian art, a visual interpretation of the act of creation in Genesis taking

the form of the cross surrounded by representatives of the living beings created.[502]

Traditionally this motif depicts representatives of the three genera of animals,[503] those in

the air, those in the water and those on land, however the anonymity of the beasts of the

Staffordshire hoard cross allows them to stand as shorthand for wildlife in general,

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[498] The similarities between the metal flourishes on the Staffordshire Hoard folded cross and these Syrian crosses are striking; however the metal beads or 'pearls' on the Syrian crosses are rounded beads, which become teardrop-shaped as they narrow at the base where the bead connects to the body of the cross. (See e.g. Stiegemann *et al.*, 2013: 99-100, cat. no 76) In contrast the metal flourishes of the Staffordshire Hoard cross are almond shaped, tapering to points both at the base where they attach to the cross arms and at the tip. They are also flattened as opposed to rounded, with a clear depression along the centre giving the distinctive impression of an ear.
[499] Leahy and Bland, 2009: 36-37; Henderson and Henderson, 2010
[500] Henderson and Henderson, 2010
[501] For a fuller discussion of the Christian interpretation of Style II ornament see Wamers, 2009
[502] Genesis 1:20-8; Elbern, 1986: 67-73; 1999: 81-90; Wamers, 2009: 159-162
[503] Wamers, 2009: 160

including the three genera of living creatures.[504] Nonetheless, the choice to use a traditional motif, the anonymous zoomorph, which had inhabited Germanic and Anglo-Saxon art for centuries, to represent a recently imported visual form must be seen as deliberate and significant.

Over the course of the seventh century the cross shape developed from decorative component to overt symbol. It was a well developed element of ornamental pattern in Anglo-Saxon England; however the cultural contact with the Mediterranean aesthetic, as transmitted by the Christian mission and resultant contact with the Church in Rome, altered the way the cross was imagined, both in form and in meaning. The concurrent existence of cross shapes as both embedded pattern and isolated form suggests that the Mediterranean-influenced shift in meaning and function was not wholesale and that Anglo-Saxons retained their traditional aesthetic preferences while potentially superimposing new Christian meaning upon them or imbuing the new with the old. That is not to say that every cross-shape, overt or not, immediately had Christian, and therefore Roman Mediterranean, resonance for a viewer or bearer, nor that every embedded cross-shape was purely decorative and stripped of all symbolic meaning. Instead, meaning was ascribed or ignored by the viewer and bearer as they chose based on their understanding of the motif and the context within which they chose to place it. This suggests that the adoption of a somewhat flexible interpretation of both the new Christian motifs and interpretations of motifs and the traditional mode of decoration were not mutually exclusive and could be used collectively, allowing for a multivalent perception.

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[504] Wamers, 2009: 161

Chapter 3 – Material Choices and Visualising the Material

3.1 All That Glitters: Materiality and Preciousness

In the attempt to understand more fully the art produced in seventh-century Anglo-Saxon England, and particularly that decorating the metalwork, the focus of the present study, analysis of the materiality of objects can be as illuminating, in terms of their purpose and significance, as iconographic study. Indeed, materials can be understood to have a role independent of this use, to the extent that certain materials can become infused with their own significance and meaning, which they then impart to the object into which they are incorporated. The embedded material significance can thus be seen as being deliberately employed as part of the function of the objects being created.

In contemporary scholarship, across many disciplines, materiality has come to infuse any number of critical and analytical approaches to everything from objects to texts to historical narratives.[1] Scholarship has thus become attentive to the physical presence of objects, their bulk, scale, and even base material-ness; in this way the experience and historical impact of the objects are considered inseparable from the tactile experience, sensory reaction, and emotional response engendered by the object,[2] despite a traditional tendency to give it a secondary role in consideration of an object and its decoration.[3] Nonetheless, the attention given to the appearance of an

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[1] This is in no way intended to be a full analysis of the evolution of materiality and its role in art historical scholarship but is instead a brief précis. For a more comprehensive discussion of materiality, art and culture see: Doy, 1998; Geismar, 2004; Woodward, 2007; Robertson, 2008; Knappett, 2011; Yonan, 2011; Back Danielsson, Fahlander and Sjöstrand, 2012

[2] For further discussion of the physicality of objects see e.g.: Mirzoeff, 1998; 1999; Hall and Hall, 1999; Sturken and Cartwright, 2001; and Manghani, Piper and Simons, 2006

[3] De Man, 1984: 122-124; Caygill, 1995: 288-289. This prioritization of the visual can be traced back to some of the founders of Art History as a discipline. Formalism suggested a comparative method as a means of exploring artistic style, with little consideration of material (Wölfflin, 1950). Iconographic analysis similarly makes little effort to include material into any discussion (Panofsky, 1955), although

object, and by extension whatever intangible symbolic experience its physical

presence conveyed, provides an inescapable sense of the significance of its physical

form and the necessary role it played in the function, practical or symbolic, of the

object.[4]

   In recent years the study of materiality has come to dominate the scholarship

of material culture, although the approach adopted is distinct from that favoured in art

history, which has tended to focus on the 'aesthetics' of viewing. In those studies,

materiality is less concerned with the manner in which the material informs and

interacts with the visual than with the object itself. Accordingly, objects are not

regarded simply as sites open for interpretation and analysis, but are considered to be

active agents in the social and political worlds within which they exist.[5] This agency

gives the objects a reciprocal relationship with humans,[6] examining how people make

and use things but also how things interact with people;[7] the line between human and

object is thus blurred: one cannot exist without the other.[8]

   The idea of materiality has also infused contemporary discussion of literature,[9]

whereby the materiality of the objects and customs described, particularly in medieval

literature, has come to be regarded as a means of understanding the relationship

between humans and objects with specific historic societies.[10] Incomplete though

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the recent scholarship on stone in Christian Anglo-Saxon England considers the symbolic function of
the material, as much as iconography (see e.g. Hawkes 1997a, 2003a, 2003b)

[4] Benjamin dubbed this sense of material and physicality as 'aura' and questioned its loss through
reproduction (1968: 219-253). Greenberg attempted to refocus the discussion to include the physical
experience of a viewer engaging with artworks (1986: 32-33). Fried (1967: 22) differentiated between
objects, which are purely material, and artwork on the basis of a symbiotic relationship between
material and meaning.

[5] Gell, 1998: 17-20; Geismar, 2004: 44

[6] Gell, 1998: 17-20

[7] Material culture studies, object agency, and thing theory are all interdisciplinary or single discipline
approaches to materiality current in contemporary scholarship. For fuller discussion of these
methodologies see: Appadurai, 1985; Tilley, 1991; Lubar and Kingery, 1993; Kingery, 1996; Gell,
1998; Brown, 2004; Miller, 2005; Woodward, 2007; Knappett, 2011

[8] Knappett, 2011: 16; Yonan, 2011: 43

[9] Tilley, 1991

[10] Tiffany, 2001: 75; Robertson, 2008: 1062-1063

these descriptions might be for modern viewers, they are invaluable for contextualizing an object and reinforcing the observations and interpretations that can be made from it.

For the purposes of this study, as noted, it is the materiality of early Anglo-Saxon metalwork that will be considered, as a means of understanding more fully the fact that conscious choices were made in the process of creation of the objects under discussion: that these choices were deliberate and could be distinct from the necessities involved in an object's form and the choice of its ornamentation. It is accepted that material can also be revelatory in terms of the historical, economic context of an object, indicating the 'monetary' value assigned to that object. In this way, the use of certain materials can be considered significant in both aesthetic and symbolic contexts and help to illustrate the role of the object within society.

3.1a Precious Materials

It is certainly the case that some materials were considered more valuable and desirable in early Anglo-Saxon England. Janes, for instance, has shown that precious metals were widely used to indicate power and wealth throughout the ancient world among disparate societies, but that the metals deemed sufficiently precious in one culture were not always considered so in others; value was greatly influenced by rarity and the resulting restriction and control of a metal's use by a society's elites.[11]

Gold is a material that seems to have been almost universally deemed precious and valuable and thereby worthy of conveying status (Fig. 3.1), in large part, of course, because of its scarcity, which meant that it could be monitored and controlled

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[11] Janes, 1998: 18; see also Herbert, 1984: xix; Morris, 1989: 515

by social elites.[12] It was obtained in various ways in the early medieval world,

although only rarely by local mining, and however it was obtained (by looting, tribute

demands, grave robbing, or confiscation), its circulation remained restricted to the

highest social circles.[13] In addition to its rarity value, gold is also highly malleable

which meant that it could be worked with a high degree of dexterity and relative ease

and thus used to great effect.[14] Finally, it has a brilliance which reflects light and

catches the eye and, most importantly, does not diminish with rust or discolouration.[15]

Given its enduring brilliance and the widespread associations between gold

and socio-economic power, it is perhaps not surprising that gold also came to be

associated with supernatural or divine power.[16] The Greco-Roman pantheon is

described as having a myriad of golden objects ranging from items of clothing, tools

and weapons, and even means of transportation.[17] The gods of the Germanic world

were also tied to gold, being described as living in a golden hall and using golden

objects in twelfth-century Eddic poetry.[18] Gold was used to decorate temples,

palaces, and eventually churches, with the intention of inspiring awe and wonder.[19]

Eventually, the ritual objects used in the observation of Christian worship came to be

made of gold and other precious materials,[20] suggesting that the potency of gold as a

material was so deeply embedded that it could transcend major ideological, cultural

and religious shifts within a society. This link between gold and divinity inflates the

value and significance of the use of gold in ornamentation, reinforcing the sense of

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[12] Herbert, 1984: xix; Janes, 1998: 18

[13] Webster, 2000: 50; Coatsworth and Pinder, 2002: 6

[14] Janes, 1998: 19; Behr, 2010: http://finds.org.uk/staffshoardsymposium/papers/charlottebehr (Accessed 17 August 2014)

[15] Janes, 1998: 19

[16] For an extensive discussion of this relationship in the antique period, see Janes, 1998. See also Behr, 2010.

[17] Hardie, 1986: 57; Barker, 1993: 169-173; Janes, 1998: 19

[18] Behr, 2010. For specific references in the Völuspá (from the Codex Regius, MS No. GKS 2365 4to) see Pálsson ,1996: stanzas 60 and 61, 63-64

[19] MacMullen, 1981: 31; Janes, 1998: 43-44, 52-54; La Niece, 2009: 92-96; Behr, 2010

[20] Janes, 1998: 42-44; La Niece, 2009: 92, 102-103; Behr, 2010

power and preciousness associated with it. However, this bolstering of the significance of gold becomes cyclical: gold is used to indicate and ornament the divine because it is precious and denotes power, and it is viewed in this way (in part) because it is associated with the divine.

Like gold, silver was also commonly valued as precious and used to convey status (Fig. 3.2). It, too, was a material difficult to obtain directly and, in the early medieval period, likely obtained through the reuse of pre-existing objects, like silver Roman coins, or imported from distant regions.[21] Silver is also highly reflective when polished giving it an even brighter appearance than gold, as suggested by Pliny's comparison of silver with daylight.[22] Unlike its precious metal counterpart, silver tarnishes if not handled and maintained properly, losing its brilliance and becoming dull and discoloured.

Garnet (Fig. 3.3), a deep red stone with distinctive light refractive properties,[23] was the dominant gemstone used for jewellery throughout Europe in the early medieval period, from the fourth to the seventh centuries.[24] Although minerals identified as garnet are relatively more common than other gemstones,[25] the regions that produced garnets of the appropriate colour and quality were significantly far removed from western Europe, some as far away as India.[26] This meant that they were a limited resource in the North and so were regarded as valuable, exotic, and precious.[27] Thus, as with the silver and gold, the rarity of garnets meant that access could be controlled and restricted, making their use a sign of wealth and status. The

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[21] Leahy, 2003: 153-154
[22] Pliny the Elder, 33, 19, 9: praecipuam gratiam huic materiae fuisse arbitror non colore, qui clarior in argento est magisque diei similis (Rackham, Jones and Eichholz, 1938-1962: 46)
[23] Adams, 2011: 10
[24] Calligaro, Colinart, Poirot and Sudres, 2002: 320
[25] Adams, 2011: 10
[26] Calligaro, Colinart, Poirot and Sudres, 2002: 326; Adams, 2011: 10, 19-21
[27] Huggett, 1988: 88-89, 91

colour of garnet was also significant in this respect, ranging from a bright red to a

deep, dark burgundy that can appear almost purple, depending on the refractive

qualities of the individual stone and how a craftsman manipulates it. Red and purple

were both long associated with Imperial status in the Roman world and by royalty in

the early medieval period, lending further significance and status to stones of those

colours.[28] Complex and nuanced Christian meanings were also invested in these

colours, especially red.[29] The most obvious association here was with the blood of

Christ.[30]

Thus, whether considering the rarity of gold, silver and garnets in the early

medieval world of Anglo-Saxon England, or their qualities or colour, the material

nature of these metals and stones can be understood to have had significance in their

own right.

3.1b Wealth and Status

The significance of objects made from such precious materials could, of course,

vary.[31] In late antiquity, wealth was both portable, in the form of jewellery, currency

and household goods, and immobile, in the form of land or buildings.[32] This

conspicuous consumption of elite goods and materials for personal and communal

use, such as gift-giving, helped maintain societal hierarchies.[33] The giving of

precious gifts, promoting the circulation of gold and silver, often in the form of

coinage, both on a personal and governmental level, can be seen as acts of exchange,

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[28] Janes, 1998: 84
[29] Kitson, 1978: 27
[30] Kitson, 1983: 86; Coatsworth, 1989: 295-296; Janes, 1998: 75; Wood, 2007: 3-13
[31] Janes, 1998: 40
[32] Janes, 1998: 40
[33] Aitchison, 1960: 152; Janes, 1998: 38

securing favour and loyalty.[34] This became a significant tool for bringing the so-called 'barbarians' from the peripheries into the empire.[35]

By extension, treasure was equally important among the Germanic successor states that emerged from the collapse of the Imperial Roman system. Whereas Roman wealth was diverse and often immobile, treasure in Germanic societies was predominantly movable: small items of jewellery, goods and coins, which could be easily circulated.[36] In fact, treasure became an important instrument of exercising royal authority in such societies, becoming the means by which territory could be seized and controlled.[37] In other words, treasure was gained through the seizure of goods and the imposition of tribute upon subjugated peoples, but also through economic trade and the receipt of gifts.[38] Overall, displays of treasure, most notably the display of jewellery, including coin jewellery, and precious materials on one's person, become increasingly important in the post-Roman, Germanic world.[39]

Against this background it is not implausible to suggest that wealth in early Anglo-Saxon England and its display in both gesture and object,[40] can be understood not only as a continuation of such traditions, but also as an aspect of the preciousness embedded in the material of the objects themselves. Personal ornament was certainly designed to signal wealth, in the form of gold and silver decoration, elaborate (garnet) jewel inlay, and complex ornamentation, and with it the bearer's status.[41] The visible display of such wealth and status on the body was sufficiently established to have persisted through the conversion period to be incorporated into the manufacture of

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[34] Veyn, 1976; King, 1980: 159; Berger, 1981; Maxfield, 1981; Janes, 1998: 38-39
[35] Janes, 1998: 39
[36] Janes, 1998: 40; Webster, 2000: 50
[37] Hardt, 1998: 255-280; Webster, 2000: 50
[38] Janes, 1998: 39-40; Webster, 2000: 50
[39] Janes, 1998: 41
[40] Gurevich, 1991: 179-180; Hedeager, 1991: 121-131; York, 1990: 166-167; Moreland, 2000: 16-17; Karkov, 2011: 101-102; Halsall, 2007: 331-332; Stiegemann *et al.*, 2013: 2. 398-412, cat. nos 342-350
[41] Stoodley, 1999: 77-78; Hinton, 2005: 57-58

Christian objects, and this continuum of visibility and the display of wealth suggests that there was something inherently significant about such practices and the associated materials in Anglo-Saxon culture.

Wealth and personal value were sufficiently embedded in Anglo-Saxon society to be reflected linguistically and archaeologically. *Wergild*, literally 'man-price', was expected to be paid as recompense in the case of death or injury, the size of the *wergild* being tied to the social status of the person and increasing according to rank.[42] In this context, Hines has pointed to the fact that the great gold buckle found in Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo weighed approximately 403.35g (Fig. 3.4), nearly equivalent to the weight of 300 gold *scillings*, the *wergild* of a Kentish nobleman.[43] It is a correlation that suggests that the man buried in or commemorated by the ship burial at Sutton Hoo literally displayed the value of his life on his person. A similar suggestion has been made about the buckle found in the burial chamber at Prittlewell in Essex (Fig. 3.5).[44] This triangular piece is of a hollow construction, like that at Sutton Hoo, and made to fit onto the leather strap of the belt; it is made from solid gold and weighs approximately 47.6g.[45] Unlike the Sutton Hoo buckle, however, the Prittlewell buckle is notably unadorned, except for the three large rivet bosses arranged in the same configuration as on its Sutton Hoo counterpart. Furthermore, and perhaps more telling, it shows no sign of wear or use on its surface, suggesting it was made specifically for the burial.[46] The lack of ornament or adornment, customary on Anglo-Saxon jewellery, supports the hypothesis that the object was designed for a

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[42] See e.g. Æðelbert's Laws, composed in the seventh century but preserved in a twelfth century compendium, or the late seventh- or early eighth-century Laws of Ine, which survive as an appendix to the later Laws of Alfred. For text of the law codes see: Liebermann, 1903-1916: I, 20-27, 89-123; Oliver, 2002. For discussion see: Whitelock, 1954: 39-45; Stenton, 1971: 261-316; Lendinara, 1997; Wormald, 1999: 93-106; Blair, 2003: 260-261; Hines, 2010: 167
[43] Hines, 2010: 167
[44] Central Museum, Southend
[45] Hines, 2010; 169
[46] Karkov, 2011: 20-21

specific funerary purpose and was intended to highlight the material, the gold, rather than function as a buckle which served to signify the status of its owner. Although there is no correlation between the specific weight of gold of the Prittlewell buckle and a recorded *wergild* of any level, the inclusion of a recognizably gold, unadorned, unused object in a burial suggests that an analogous significance was nonetheless likely attached to the object.[47]

Furthermore, drawing on Merovingian parallels, it has been argued that the Sutton Hoo purse with its monetary contents functioned as symbolic of a ruler's power to distribute wealth (Fig. 3.6).[48] One of the roles of the lord in Germanic society was to distribute the wealth gained through conquest to those who had helped secure it, usually in the form of lavish ritualised celebration and gift-giving to confirm or reaffirm the bond between lord and retainer.[49] Elaborate descriptions of the Anglo-Saxon lord as "gift-giver" or "ring giver" articulated in some of the (later) poetry reinforce the importance, socially, to the visible display, use, and distribution of wealth in Anglo-Saxon culture.[50] The idea of the good lord ensuring the love and loyalty of his men, beginning when young, securing their support through his and their lives, is a theme often repeated in Old English poetry.

> Good companions must encourage a young nobleman to war-making and to ring-giving.[51]

This brief gnomic verse speaks to the relationships formed early as a young lord, or future lord, secures his friends and future retainers by giving them gifts. The short and pithy admonition is taken from a longer set of verses known as *Maxims II*

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[47] Hines, 2010; 169

[48] British Museum, 1939,1003.1-1939,1003.42. Webster, 1992: 76; Webster and Brown, 1997: 223

[49] Gurevich, 1991: 182-184; Samson, 1991: 87-93; Hines, 1989: 193-205; York, 1990: 166-167; Moreland, 2000: 16-17

[50] Neville, 2006: 156; Clemoes, 1995: 3-67; Stevens, 1978: 219-238; Davis, 2008: 115

[51] *Maxims II*, ll. 14-15: Geongne æþeling sceolan gode gesiðas byldan to beaduwe and to beahgife (Clemoes, 2006: 7; Bradley, 1982: 513)

preserved in an eleventh-century manuscript, Cotton Tiberius B i.[52] Together with

Maxims I, preserved in the Exeter Book, these are understood to represent an Old

English poetical device for the transmission of knowledge and wisdom, albeit in a

somewhat haphazard manner.[53] Despite the relatively late date for *Maxims II*, the use

of gnomic devices in earlier poetry suggests that this form of wisdom poetry was also

current in earlier Anglo-Saxon culture.[54] The following excerpt from *Beowulf*, the

core of which dates from at least after the fifth century,[55] follows similar lines,

explaining how a young nobleman, generous with his gift giving even when in his

father's house, makes lifelong friends who will support him in battle and old age.

> And a young prince must be prudent like that,
> Giving freely while his father lives
> so that afterwards in age when fighting starts
> steadfast companions will stand beside him
> and hold the line.[56]

Old English poetry also speaks of the manner in which displays of wealth

played such an important role in constructing understanding of an individual's

identity. This is illustrated by an episode in *Beowulf*. In the poem, Beowulf,

journeying to Danish shores, is stopped by a watchman who remarks on the group's

fine and precious battle gear, which he takes as evidence of their nobility, before

enquiring further as to their identity and purpose.[57]

> When the watchman on the wall, the Shieldings' lookout
> Whose job it was to guard the sea-cliffs,
> Saw shields glittering on the gangplank
> And battle-equipment being unloaded

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[52] British Library, Cotton Tiberius B i. Poole, 1998: 52
[53] Cavill, 1999: 1-4
[54] Poole, 1998: 21-22
[55] Whitelock, 1951: 85-86; Foley, 1990: 34-35; Frank, 1997: 123; Howe, 1997: 214-216; Gwara, 2008: 100-106
[56] *Beowulf*, ll. 20-24a: Swa sceal geong guma gode gewyrcean, | fromum feohgiftum on fæder bearme, | þæt hine on ylde eft gewunigen | wilgesiþas, þonne wig cume, | leode gelæsten. (Klaeber, 2008: 3; Heaney, 1999: 3)
[57] Gwara, 2008: 100-102; Staver, 2005: 36-38

He had to find out who and what
The arrivals were. So he rode to the shore,
This horseman of Hrothgar's, and challenged them
In formal terms, flourishing his spear:
"What kind of men are you who arrive
Rigged out for combat in coats of mail,
Sailing here over the sea lanes
In your steep-hulled boat? I have been stationed
As lookout on this coast for a long time.
My job is to watch the waves for raiders,
And danger to the Danish shore.
Never before has a force under arms
Disembarked so openly---not bothering to ask
If the sentries allowed them safe passage
Or the clan had consented. Nor have I seen
A mightier man-at-arms on this earth
Than the one standing here: unless I am mistaken,
He is truly noble. This is no mere
Hanger-on in a hero's armour.
So now, before you fare inland
As interlopers, I have to be informed
About who you are and where you hail from.[58]

The material evidence, along with such literary suggestions, indicate that, in both

early Germanic societies generally, and early Anglo-Saxon society specifically, the

quality and type of objects displayed by the individual served as initial indicators of

who and what they might be.[59] It could be suggested, therefore, that the display of

personal wealth on the body of a person dictated the type of experience and reception

one could expect in social interactions: the more powerful and wealthy the person, the

more luxurious and impressive the display of wealth, and the more respect garnered.

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[58] *Beowulf*, ll. 229-255: þa of wealle geseah weard Scildinga, | se þe holmclifu healdan scolde, | beran ofer bolcan beorhte randas, | fyrdsearu fuslicu; hine fyrwyt bræc | modgehygdum, hwæt þa men wæron. | Gewat him þa to waroðe wicge ridan | þegn Hroðgares, þrymmum cwehte | mægenwudu mundum, meþelwordum frægn: | "Hwæt syndon ge searohæbbendra, | byrnum werede, þe þus brontne ceol | ofer lagustræte lædan cwomon, | hider ofer holmas? Ic hwile wæs | endesæta, ægwearde heold, | þe on land Dena laðra nænig | mid scipherge sceðþan ne meahte. | No her cuðlicor cuman ongunnon | lindhæbbende; ne ge leafnesword | guðfremmendra gearwe ne wisson, | maga gemedu. Næfre ic maran geseah | eorla ofer eorþan ðonne is eower sum, | secg on searwum; nis þæt seldguma, | wæpnum geweorðad, næfne him his wlite leoge, | ænlic ansyn. Nu ic eower sceal | frumcyn witan, ær ge fyr heonan, | leassceaweras, on land Dena | furþur feran. (Klaeber, 2008: 10-11; Heaney, 1999: 9-10)
[59] Suzuki, 2000; Owen-Crocker, 2004: 317; Walton Rogers, 2007: 111

3.2 Gold and Garnet: A Traditional Aesthetic

The precedents for gold and garnet decoration, an aesthetic that predominates in the high status metalwork in Anglo-Saxon society and the wider Germanic tradition (Fig. 3.7), lie in material dating from the late-third and early-fourth centuries in disparate parts of Europe (Fig. 3.8a-b),[60] for example along the Black Sea coasts of the Crimean peninsula and in what is now modern-day Georgia.[61] The decoration on these objects is characterised by flat, faceted garnet plates set into copper-alloy, gilt silver, and gold bezels and usually backed with gold or silver foils.[62] This style of inlaid garnets is commonly associated with the movement of Huns among Germanic tribes and is therefore characterised as Germanic;[63] and it has ben argued that it articulated practices learned from Byzantine craftsmen which were reworked and elaborated during the extended period of Germanic migration westwards.[64] Whether this was indeed the case (as seems likely), the local Germanic fashions differed considerably from these eastern Roman exemplars, particularly in terms of the regularity of their inlay and the use of backing foil and paste.[65]

Garnet cloisonné, occasionally offset with stones or inlay of other colours, seems to have prevailed in the ornamentation of late fourth- or early fifth-century Germanic gold, or more rarely silver, and the type of jewellery it was used to create, cloisonné brooches, buckles, weapon fittings and pendants.[66] The techniques used to manipulate the metal and gems remain relatively consistent across different regions,[67] underlining the fact that traditional craft technologies were shared amongst the

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[60] Walters Art Museum, 57.558 (a); 57.556 (b)
[61] Arrhenius, 1985: 125, 181–2; Zaseckaja, 1993: 437-443; Ščukin and Bažan, 1995: 65; Adams, 2010: 87
[62] Adams, 1991: 47-48; Coatsworth and Pinder, 2002: 132-148; Leahy, 2003: 160-161
[63] Riegl, 1901: 192
[64] Spier, 2012: 34
[65] Adams, 1991: 114-135; Spier, 2012: 35
[66] Adams, 1991: 81-83
[67] Campbell, 2000: 72-73

societies interested in gold and garnet jewellery.[68] In fact, the pervasiveness of the style was so entrenched among Germanic societies that by the sixth century a law forbidding the use of jewels on buckles for military personnel was enacted throughout the Roman Empire.[69] The significance of this law, preserved in the Codex Justinianus,[70] lies in the prohibition itself: the need to discourage the wearing of such highly ornamented jewellery indicates just how pervasive the practice was.

Within this longstanding Germanic tradition, gold and garnet jewellery was both the fashionable and the traditional form of expressing status in personal ornamentation in seventh-century Anglo-Saxon England.[71] These materials were used on a myriad of objects: from dress ornaments, like pendants, brooches, buckles and pins; to armaments such as seax fittings and sword pommels. The garnets used were either rounded and polished, smooth cabochon stones or cut flat stones that were shaped and inset into cloisonné cells. There is some discussion about the origins of the supply of each type of garnet, with the flat garnets considered to have emerged from Bohemia, in Eastern Europe, while the cabochon type was probably from a more distant source, like Afghanistan or India.[72] The cabochon stones, being thicker, tend to appear darker and deeper in colour while the flat garnets are generally cut into thin, transparent slices and set over reflective foils to increase the brightness of the red tones.[73] The two types of garnet were used both independently and in conjunction with each other and could be set alongside other stones or materials, such as glass or shell, but the aesthetic of visible, recognizable red and yellow, gold and garnet, remained dominant.

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[68] For extensive discussion of the techniques used in early medieval jewellery making see: Arrhenius, 1985; Bimson, 1985; East, 1985; Adams, 1991
[69] Adams, 1991: 326
[70] Cod. Just. XI.XI.I (Scott, 1932, xv: 177-178)
[71] Spier, 2012: 32-37
[72] Arrhenius, 1985; Leahy, 2003: 160; Hinton, 2005: 53
[73] Leahy, 2003: 160-161; Hinton, 2005: 53-54

The effect is clearly illustrated by the decoration of a small, seventh-century, gold and garnet teardrop-shaped pendant found at King's Field in Faversham, Kent (Fig. 3.9).[74] This is filled with garnet and glass cloisonné, bordered by a double frame of twisted filigree and beaded wire, and has a wide suspension loop decorated by four grooves set at unequal but symmetrical intervals. A central flat garnet, set in a comparatively large cell, mimics the teardrop shape of the pendant and is backed with a foil bearing diamond-shaped hatching. Four semi-circular shapes, each formed by three stepped cloisons, surround the central setting. Two garnets, backed with more tightly hatched foil, create the curvature while a single T-shaped cell inset with blue glass (although two are now missing) sits against the frame. The space between the semi-circles, surrounding the central teardrop shape, are filled with four pairs of L-shaped cells, each pair forming a rough rectangle, again backed with the finely hatched foils. The complete cloisonné pattern creates an effect of complex symmetry and balance in a very small decorative space, incorporating curves and angles formed from multiple coloured stones and all framed by bright gold.

Another seventh-century pendant (Fig. 3.10),[75] found at Twickenham near London and using the same materials, presents a similarly complex pattern, but through very different means. The circular, openwork pendant is filled with gold filigree and set with five cabochon garnets. Two bands of beaded filigree with a third inner band of plaited filigree form the exterior border of the pendant. Four circular bosses formed by a garnet cabochon set into a gold, beaded collar and surrounded by three bands of plaited filigree are set equidistant around the inner border. Straight lengths of plaited filigree connect the four bosses to form a square or lozenge within the circle. A central boss of the same type completes the pattern, forming an axis

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[74] British Museum, .1140.'70
[75] British Museum, 1912,1220.1

point through which the eye can traverse in any direction. The cabochon finishing of the garnets gives them a dark, nearly opaque colour. The filigree pattern serves to fragment the reflective surface of the gold, causing a less glossy but no less sparkling effect. The overall visual effect is dramatically different from the Faversham pendant but is no less impressive in the preciousness of its materials and decorative complexity.

An early seventh-century disc brooch (Fig. 3.11),[76] found at Priory Hill near Dover, combines both types of garnet with composite gold. This piece has two rings of garnet cloisonné accented by T-shaped glass cells. The first ring borders the entire brooch while the second encircles the central boss. The space between the two is filled with dense gold filigree, divided into four quadrants by four round bosses, each connected to the inner cloisonné ring by a single square inset garnet. The filigree ornamentation forms five bands of alternating pattern, three creating a herringbone effect and interspersed by two with elaborate scrolling. The five bosses are each made by round cabochon garnets collared by beaded gold wire and set onto shaped white paste. One of the small bosses and most of the paste are now missing. The central boss and the cavity that would have been filled with white paste are significantly larger than the four satellite bosses, each of which is accented by a border of filigree. A distinctive cruciform is formed by the pattern of bosses within the overall disc shape.[77] The pairing of the cabochon and cut garnets accentuates the different colouration of the stones, deep but dark as opposed to bright, while the use of gold filigree creates a more fragmented reflective effect in contrast to the smooth polish of the cloisonné garnets.

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[76] British Museum, 1879,1013.1
[77] For more extensive discussion of the patterns formed within Anglo-Saxon ornamentation, see below: 195-200

The attention paid to the colour, tone, and reflective quality in the creation of these objects indicates the importance embedded in these visual effects. The manipulation and mixing of the sensory experience must be seen as deliberate and significant: as a conscious effort on the part of the craftsmen to control the experience of the viewer.[78] Barley suggested that Anglo-Saxons probably perceived colours as inextricably attached to objects, as opposed to abstract concepts of description, meaning that their 'red' is not equivalent to our modern conception of 'red'.[79] Here, it must be noted that Anglo-Saxon colour terms were designated more with regard to brightness than colour gradient.[80] This means that the hue or saturation of the colour is what is being prioritised by colour terminology in Old English.[81] In the light of this, it is particularly interesting that Anglo-Saxon goldsmiths, adept at modifying the thickness of the stones being set, could manipulate (Fig. 3.12) the brightness and hue of the garnets used, employing thinner stones to achieve lighter effects, and thicker stones to present darker tones, while the hatch-marked gold foils set behind the stones reflected more light, making the backed stones brighter.[82]

In addition to considerations of the perceptions of the relative brilliance of the materials, the red and purple tones of the garnets were nevertheless, as noted, associated with Imperial frames of reference throughout the late antique and early medieval world. Furthermore, the early Anglo-Saxon exegetical work of Bede linked the colour red with four of the twelve stones of the apocalypse, describing two as related to blood and two as related to fire – a set of associations established in early Christian exegesis.[83] Such detailed exegetical engagement with the colours

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[78] For further discussion of visual perception in Anglo-Saxon art, see below: 188-195
[79] Barley, 1974: 16-18
[80] Mead, 1899: 169-206; Lerner, 1951: 246-249; Barley, 1974: 16-18
[81] Mead, 1899: 169-206; Lerner, 1951: 246-249; Barley, 1974: 16-18
[82] Coatsworth and Pinder, 2002: 132-148
[83] Bede, *Apocalypseos*, 121A (Gryson, 2001: 543); Wallis, 2013: 154; Kitson, 1983: 88

articulated by gold and garnet metalwork, as well as the technical skill involved in achieving the different colours, together provide strong indications that the colours as well as the stones and materials used were deemed capable of exemplifying deeply symbolic meanings and significances in early Anglo-Saxon society.

In this respect it is perhaps not coincidental that the early to mid seventh-century, pendant cross found in Holderness, East Yorkshire is composed entirely of gold and garnet cloisonné (Fig. 3.13),[84] not unlike the Ixworth cross already discussed.[85] This equal-armed cross is bordered by a frame of square set garnets, while the arms are filled with more arrow-shaped, albeit roughly carved, stones. The central boss is set with a large cabochon garnet, darker in colour than the surrounding ring of square-set cloisonné, and drilled with a ring that was likely to be set with contrasting glass or gold infill. Despite its somewhat battered state, the materials and their settings again demonstrate how colour and light could be manipulated to create the most evocative viewing experience, while additionally playing on more exegetical frames of reference in its design.

Among such objects, St Cuthbert's cross is perhaps the most well known seventh-century pectoral cross (Fig. 3.14),[86] dating to the second half of that century.[87] Made of gold and decorated primarily by garnet cloisonné, it features a central boss set with a large circular garnet, resting upon a white shell base and collared in gold with a dogtooth design. Four equal length arms abut the central collar, curving in towards the centre of the arm, and flaring back out to terminate in curved edges. Each arm is filled with garnets set in channels of rectangular cells.[88] The more intricate aspects of the ornamentation are created by the gold itself, thickly

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[84] Ashmolean Museum, AN1999.206
[85] See Chapter 2: 155
[86] Durham Cathedral Treasury
[87] Webster, 1991: 133-34 cat.no. 98; Bruce-Mitford, 1956: 308
[88] Webster and Backhouse, 1991: 133-34

bordering the channels of inset garnets along the arms with thin gold strips, gold

beaded wire, dummy rivets, and dogtooth friezes.[89] But, here, the garnets have no foil

backing, making them appear very dark. This been argued to be symptomatic of the

later date of production,[90] but is equally, if not more, likely to reflect a deliberate

effort to make the garnets appear dark and rich and so evoke responses to a specific

set of symbolic associations, perhaps making a specific reference to the lifeblood of

Christ on the cross,[91] or the apocalyptic flames promised of the Day of Judgment.[92]

In studying these pectoral crosses, or any of their counterparts, it becomes

clear that the distinctive gold and garnet cloisonné is so pervasive that it must have

been the preferred ornamentation of the form. The effect of bright red hues, darker

red pools, and bright gold shining through is evocative in a manner distinct from the

traditional significance and potency. The verses of the *The Dream of the Rood*, which

describe a visionary cross both dripping with blood and shining with treasure, seem to

articulate the aesthetic exactly:

> I saw that doom-beacon
> turn trappings and hews: sometimes with water wet,
> drenched with blood's going; sometimes with jewels decked.[93]

Anyone familiar with the verse could not help but recall the shining yellow gold and

deep red garnets of the Anglo-Saxon crosses.[94] Indeed, the poem has long been

linked to the pectoral cross discovered in Cuthbert's coffin, and by extension the other

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[89] The layered construction of the ornament has led to its characterization as unusually architectural in the context of seventh-century metalwork from Anglo-Saxon England, creating an interesting cross-current between metalwork that takes on characteristics and associations of architecture (in stone) and carved stone that takes on characteristics of metalwork, and likely carrying the symbolic significances of both media. See further, Bruce-Mitford, 1956: 318

[90] Bruce-Mitford, 1956: 313

[91] '*Annunciatio S Mariae*' (Morris, 1880: 8-11). See also: Mead, 1899: 186; Kitson, 1983: 76

[92] Mead, 1899: 186; Kitson, 1983: 76; Bradford Bedingfield, 2001

[93] DoR, ll. 21b-23: Geseah ic þæt fūse bēacen | wendan wædum ond blēom; hwīlum hit wæs mid wætan bestēmed, | beswyled mid swātes gange, hwīlum* mid since gegyrwed. (Swanton, 1970: 1-2; Bradley, 1982: 160)

[94] Coatsworth, 1980: 59; 1989: 296; Coatsworth and Pinder, 2002: 161-162

gold and garnet pectoral crosses recovered from this period, both for the combination of red and gold as well as the effect of the gold shining through the translucent garnets.[95]

The distinctly red and gold effect of these precious materials is translated into both manuscript and sculptural decoration in the seventh century.[96] It has been suggested above that there was some significant symbolic associations attached to the aesthetic tradition, likely related to preciousness, value, and status. The significance infused in the traditional use of gold and garnet could then be transmitted to the new forms of metalwork as well as the metalwork cognates in manuscripts and on sculpture brought by the Mediterranean-influenced Christian art and objects.

3.2a Faking the Bling

Having seen that the perceived significances of the precious materials were so integral to their presentation in seventh-century Anglo-Saxon England, it is of course necessary to recognise the corollary to this: part of the preciousness of gold, silver and garnet was their rarity, which was particularly acute in Anglo-Saxon England in the fifth through seventh centuries, compared with the relative availability of thse materials in Scandinavia and on the European Continent.[97] The Anglo-Saxons were thus dependant on the reuse of existing supplies of precious metal, such as residual Roman material, and imported supplies, most likely in the form of gold and silver coins that were melted down for their metal.[98] By the second half of the seventh century, the supplies of gold coming into England from the Continent had, however, dwindled significantly and the quality of that gold had suffered as well. These

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[95] Coatsworth, 1989: 296; Karkov, 2011: 31-32
[96] Richard Bailey has long argued that carved stones in Anglo-Saxon England were often decorated in various shades of paint with red being the most ubiquitous. Bailey 1980: 25-26; 1996: 5-6
[97] Webster, 2000: 49-59; Hines, 2010; 165-166
[98] Webster, 2000: 53; Leahy, 2003: 153; Hinton, 2005: 53

changes have been linked to the cessation of gold subsidies by the Byzantine Emperor to western rulers earlier in the century.[99] As a result, the gold used in both coinage and high status jewellery was slowly debased with silver and other lesser metals,[100] meaning that the ratio of gold debasement in jewellery fluctuated depending on the level of purity in the objects, coins or older artefacts being melted down by the goldsmith to make the new item.[101] By the second half of the seventh century, this had resulted in gold of a lighter shade, known as 'pale gold'.[102] A recent study performed on the Staffordshire Hoard has demonstrated this clearly: the purity of gold, even in high status objects, was debased over the course of the seventh century.[103] Most of the gold items found in the earlier seventh-century Sutton Hoo burial are generally of 80%-90% purity,[104] while only a handful of items found in the later seventh-century Staffordshire Hoard have a similar composition;[105] the majority range from 50%-75% purity.[106]

At the same time that the gold being imported to Anglo-Saxon England was becoming increasingly debased, the supply of cut and shaped garnets was also decreasing.[107] There is evidence that well shaped garnets, likely from older pieces of jewellery, were reused, even reshaped using cruder methods, in objects dating from the later part of the seventh century.[108] As noted, the garnets used in cloisonné, cut flat and shaped, were supplied from Eastern Europe and so the supply would have

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[99] Grierson, 1991: 19-20; Janes, 1998: 41; Hinton, 2005: 53, 66; Sawyer, 2013: 53
[100] Leahy, 2003: 153; Hinton, 2005: 67; Sawyer, 2013: 53
[101] Hinton, 2005: 67
[102] Gannon, 2003: 10-12; Hinton, 2005: 67; Sawyer, 2013: 53
[103] This information depends on very recent developments, announced to the public but not yet published for academic review. Kennedy, 2014 [Date Accessed 20 October 2014]; Keys, 2014 [Date Accessed, 20 October, 2014]
[104] Hughes *et al*, 1978: 618-625; Oddy, 1988: 33
[105] Hilt, 2014: 15
[106] Kennedy, 2014; Keys, 2014
[107] Hinton, 2005: 67
[108] Carver, 1998: 183; Hinton, 2000: 83-86; 2005: 67

been disrupted if not cut off by the Avars at that time.[109] Although these limitations

in the supply of the materials did not halt the production of gold and garnet

ornamentation, the increased difficulty in access must have increased its rarity and

value, and so the status of objects displaying those materials.

     As a result, it seems that treating an object made of lesser metal became a

significant means of imitating gold objects without the costs associated with pure

gold. It is notable that the reduced gold objects from the Staffordshire Hoard were

chemically treated to appear like purer gold.[110] Gilding was another means of

achieving the appearance of gold. In Anglo-Saxon England this was achieved by

using hot mercury to create a bond between a thin layer of gold and the baser metal,

usually silver, copper, or copper-alloy.[111] Once gilded, an object would appear gold

to any viewers, embodying all the same reflective properties and richness of yellow

colour. While that aesthetic effect might not last, as gilding can be worn away quite

quickly depending on the relative thickness of the gilt layer, the initial aesthetic would

be comparable to that achieved by gold. Jewellery items made from composite, or

debased, gold as well as gilded metals could also be inset with garnets and other

precious materials and be ornamented in the finest decorative manner, retaining their

high status appearance, while rendering them less valuable due to their lack of pure

gold.[112] Likewise, a cost effective way to approximate the more valuable and

increasingly rare garnet, in order to achieve the high status red and gold effect of gold

and garnet, was to use glass or enamel insets. Seventh-century red enamel cloisonné

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[109] Arrhenius, 1985: 24-25, 35-36; Quast and Schüssler, 2000; Hinton, 2005: 67
[110] Kennedy, 2014; Keys, 2014
[111] Oddy, 1981: 76-77; Leahy, 2003: 158
[112] Leahy, 2003: 161-163

came to serve as a 'poor man's' garnet cloisonné,[113] being used in the same manner as its more costly counterpart.

The importance of being seen to have the status and wealth to afford such (rare) metals in Anglo-Saxon England becomes clear in the light of the attempts to approximate them with other materials. Even when an object was not solid gold, it was made to look as golden and eye-catching as possible. This desire to be perceived as having wealth and status was clearly deeply entrenched in Anglo-Saxon social mores, and those who could not afford, or lacked access to precious materials, did what they could to approximate them. Wealth, and the objects that made a person's wealth highly visible, were clearly important.

The early seventh-century disc brooch from Sarre demonstrates this (Fig. 3.15).[114] It is constructed from a gilt copper-alloy composite with a silver back plate and decorated with garnet cloisonné, white shell, and gold filigree.[115] It has a large central boss of white shell, collared by a serrated silver and gold bead filigree band; set with a similarly collared, flat, round garnet; and is flanked by four smaller shell and garnet cloisonné bosses. The central boss is cut into four sections by gilt silver bands approximating plaited gold filigree. The silver bands and satellite bosses both form cruciform shapes, although they do not fall on the same axis through the central boss of the brooch.[116] The piece is primarily constructed of metal less valuable than gold: copper alloy and silver. Although most of these are still quite valuable, the gilding and its construction give the brooch the appearance of solid gold, garnet, and exotic shell, approximating a very high status object.

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[113] Buckton, 1982: 102
[114] British Museum, 1860,1024.1
[115] Webster and Backhouse, 1991: 48 cat. no. 31a
[116] Webster and Backhouse, 1991: 48; Karkov, 2011: 26

More telling, however, are the objects that are not made from lesser status

materials, such as silver-gilt or composite gold, but from base materials. A small

saucer brooch dated roughly to the late-sixth century made from copper-alloy was

found at King's Field in Kent (Fig. 3.16).[117] This is very simple in design, forming

three concentric rings of decoration surrounding a central boss. The outermost is

unornamented, while the two inner ones are ornamented with relatively crude

geometric patterns of incised line. The central boss is raised and set with red enamel.

The remains of gilt indicate that the brooch was originally gilded on the surface. The

overall effect of the original uniform gilding and the inset red enamel, red and yellow,

would have been akin to that produced by gold and garnet. The brooch, therefore, can

be seen as an attempt to approximate, with less valuable materials, the aesthetic

tradition embedded in the gold and garnet ornamentation of Anglo-Saxon England in

the sixth and seventh centuries. Achieving the same aesthetic effect despite limited

access to the precious materials might indicate reduced availability, but it might

equally express social 'aspirations' among those not fully part of the social elite in

that region of Kent.

A defter version of this type of ornamentation can also be seen in a seventh-

century disc brooch (Fig. 3.17),[118] made from silvered copper-alloy with gold accents

and inset glass paste now preserved in the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Like

its earlier counterparts, the brooch's ornamentation is composed of concentric rings

around a central circular boss of red glass paste set in a gold or gilded collar, but it is

articulated in a more ornate manner than that of the King's Field brooch, and applied

to the copper-alloy base rather than incised into it. The outer ring has a double

dogtooth pattern along the edge and would have originally been silvered. Around the

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[117] British Museum, .1060.'70
[118] Metropolitan Museum, 17.192.57

central boss, a ring of spiral hearts bordered by two bands of beaded gold mimic the intricate filigree work of higher status metalwork, both in the colour choices and in a deliberate mixing of pattern and technique. The space between the more elaborately decorated rings was filled with a thin sheet of gold. The brooch would have originally been highly reflective from the silvering and gold appliqué, while the red glass of the boss still retains its brightness.

The use of less valuable materials to create facsimile high status gold and garnet jewellery was not an Anglo-Saxon innovation. Two Frankish disc brooches dating from the sixth or seventh century again approximate the look of high status ornament in lesser materials (Fig. 3.18a-b).[119] Both brooches are made from copper alloy with a thin gold disc and red glass paste applied onto the base. The brooches have a round central boss, likely originally glass paste but now lost, and four triangular insets of red glass, arranged in a cruciform pattern around it. The glass 'stones' are set into a thin sheet-gold disc with lines of repoussé dots bordering the disc and accenting the insets. The smaller gold disc is applied to the copper-alloy base which frames it, decorated with a waffle-like pattern. These artefacts illustrate how the association of precious materials with status and power and the tradition of the gold and garnet aesthetic led to the fabrication of false analogues throughout the Germanic regions.

3.2b The Material Value of Decoration

Understandably, discussion of what was considered evidence of wealth and status has, thus far, focused largely on the material value of the object. The highest status objects are made of the most valuable metals, semi-precious jewels and other rare materials,

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[119] Metropolitan Museum, 17.192.137 (a); 17.192.65 (b)

while other lower status objects approximated the aesthetic of their high status counterparts. It is not surprising that wealth and status are associated with the ability to procure, own, and flaunt the most prized materials. However, it can be argued that there was an aspect of the objects which increased their value and status exponentially: the effects achieved by their decoration.

In addition to being made of the richest materials, the objects contained within the most elaborately furnished Anglo-Saxon graves – the so-called princely burials – are often ornamented with the most technically intricate and detailed decoration.[120] Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo remains one of the richest high status, 'princely' burials of the Anglo-Saxon period and the artefacts excavated from it are of the highest quality and value. A small, gold and garnet cloisonné triangular dummy buckle might be overlooked in the shadow of the other, more prominent, Sutton Hoo treasures (Fig. 3.19).[121] However, despite its small size and relative simplicity, the buckle is a masterpiece of technical execution and geometric ornamentation. As denoted by the 'label' it has been given, this object is shaped like a triangular buckle but is not functional: its form is, instead, part of the ornamentation. Nearly every available surface is decorated with cloisonné work in complex and alternating patterns. Each decorative field is separated from the others by a gold framing border or a decorative boss; however, they are all in dialogue with each other, creating a shifting but harmonious rhythm as the eye moves over the surface of the object. The three bosses, two small collared cabochon garnets, and a single large collared boss formed by five cloisonné garnet cells complement and interact with the fields of pattern on the body of the 'buckle' and with each other. The details of the design are all highlighted by

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[120] Webster and Backhouse, 1991; Carver, 1994: 112; Geake, 1997; Webster and Brown, 1997; Webster, 2001: 137; Karkov, 2011: 27-29; Webster, 2012: 117-125
[121] British Museum, 1939,1010.10

the minutely constructed cloisonné cells and each flat garnet is meticulously shaped

and set into the appropriate cell with no evidence of miscalculations. The complexity

of the cells would demand extreme precision in the shaping of the insets. The stones

are backed with thin, hatch-marked gold foil, which serves to reflect light through the

stone, making it appear brighter than those cells lacking the foil backings. The

cloisonné work itself is typified by combining larger and smaller shaped stones into

dynamic patterns; they are details suggesting that the 'buckle' was created in the same

workshop as the more familiar Sutton Hoo artefacts, which seems, technologically

and materially, to have been among the more elite of its time – and included

consideration of the pleasure of viewing in its criteria of manufacture.

A gold and garnet cloisonné strip of unknown function (Fig. 3.20),[122] found in

the Staffordshire Hoard, demonstrates a similar level of technical care and intricate

ornamentation designed to achieve analogous effects. Possibly part of the

ornamentation of a box of some kind, the strip was forcibly removed from its original

setting and damaged before being buried as part of the hoard.[123] Despite its rough

treatment, the intricacy and precision of the original cloisonné pattern can be readily

observed. The undamaged cloisonné cells are relatively symmetrical and evenly

spaced, while the garnets are well shaped and well fitted into the T-shaped or oval

cells. The cloisonné strips border rectangular panels of gold, each ornamented with a

tightly interlaced filigree serpent. The geometric regularity of the cloisonné

complements and accentuates the angularity of the panel which in turn highlights the

serpentine curves of the filigree snakes. As a whole, the ornamentation is well

planned and effective and executed with precision.

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[122] Staffordshire Hoard, K513
[123] Leahy and Bland, 2009: 42, Hilt, 2014: 16

The triangular shoulder clasps recovered from the early seventh-century burial mound at Taplow offer a further, if alternate, variation on the highly ornate patterning that Anglo-Saxon craftsmen were capable of producing (Fig. 3.21).[124] They are filled with the sinuous forms of interlacing zoomorphs. These have a copper alloy core which is wrapped in gold foil and overlain with filigree zoomorphs,[125] which are more clearly confined within a frame than their Sutton Hoo counterparts, but nevertheless evoke an analogous sense of intricate complexity and restless motion barely restrained. Here, the use of copper for the core as well as the filigree ornament serves to reduce the amount of gold needed to craft the object, which might be seen as an indication of lower status and lesser wealth. However, the quality of the ornamentation forms a layered and complicated pattern, belying the possibility that it was produced by a workshop of lesser technical accomplishment. The scale and precision of the ornament, as well as the vitality of the design, give clear insight into the skills of its producers. Furthermore, the quality and quantity of artefacts recovered from the burial mound,[126] along with the shoulder clasps, suggest that the burial was of a very high status. Rather it can be argued that, while the Taplow clasps might represent a (comparatively) restricted access to gold,[127] such limitations did not hinder the creativity of those responsible for the production of such 'high status' and precious objects.

Instead, the technical proficiency and intricacy shown in the decorative choices made in these objects suggests that the type of decoration and the manner in which it was executed were important in establishing the value and preciousness of the object. Clearly, gold and other precious materials were not the sole indications of

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[124] British Museum, 1883,1214.3
[125] Stevens, 1884: 61–71; Webster, 1991: 55–56 cat. no. 43
[126] For a complete listing of the artefacts recovered from Taplow see the original Archaeological Report. Stevens, 1884: 61-71
[127] Webster, 2000: 49-59; Hines, 2010; 165-166; Karkov, 2011: 27-28

status and wealth in Anglo-Saxon England. The ability to employ craftsmen of the highest technical abilities was also a relevant factor in displaying such indicators, but the ornamentation produced by these craftsmen also embodied preciousness in its own right, a tangible representation of value embedded in its intricacy and articulation of fine detail.

3.3 Visual Perception: Perplexing Patterns and Reflecting Light

The underlying aesthetic tradition articulated by this intricacy is significant. Regardless of whether the visual elements are recognizably zoomorphic, abstracted, purely geometric, or some combination of the three, it is, as has often been noted, very rare to find objects with much empty space or minimal ornament on the decorative field.[128] Instead, most of the available space is covered with complex and sometimes overlapping patterns. What has not been so commonly noted, however, is the manner in which these create a dense visual field that the eye must traverse in order to see and absorb the imagery presented, despite the fact that recent scholarship has begun to raise ideas about early Anglo-Saxon ornament as a deeply symbolic and often deliberately ambiguous visual language.[129] In fact, this understanding means it is possible to look at the extensive and complex decoration of Anglo-Saxon objects as far more significant than simply illustrating *horror vacui*. It means it is possible to focus on the transformative properties of the complex patterns, an approach which prioritises shifting experience as the eye moves over this dense decoration, uncovering successive shapes, one after another, which can, in turn be focused on.[130]

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[128] To say that objects with minimal decoration are rare is not to imply that they did not exist. Items like the Prittlewell belt buckle, with no decoration, or the Faversham buckle, with a single dominant decorative element, are present in the material record but are vastly outnumbered by the more heavily ornamented and patterned objects.
[129] Hawkes, 1997: 312-318; 1999: 203-208
[130] Gombrich, 1979

The great gold buckle from Sutton Hoo is an ideal exemplar of this process (Fig. 3.22).[131] As already mentioned,[132] it has long been recognised as incorporating thirteen discrete zoomorphs, each of which can be deciphered with close attention and familiarity with the almost formulaic conventions governing the presentation of beasts in Anglo-Saxon art. However, without such traditional knowledge, or the time to examine the object, it is unlikely that much would be perceived beyond stylised patterning. Thus, engagement with the ornamentation on the buckle involves a process of viewing and uncovering, rather than a momentary, passing impression: time is required to explore and unpick the complexities it embodies.

At first glance (Fig. 3.23), perhaps the most important glance for present purposes, the buckle presents a shining mass of lines and variegated surfaces; upon closer inspection the confusion resolves into a complex but orderly and geometric sinuous pattern; upon even deeper examination the pattern becomes clearly zoomorphic with eyes, limbs, jaws, and beaks emerging into focus. The effective confusion or ambiguity of the buckle's decoration would have been enhanced whenever it was worn:[133] the placement of the buckle at waist level, surrounded by moving fabrics and other pieces of jewellery, would have made close viewing of the design impossible, leaving an observer with little more than a series of transitory impressions.

Further obfuscating the viewing was the play of light, be it sunlight or firelight, on the highly reflective object, which would have further challenged long

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[131] Bruce Mitford, 1978: 536-563; Webster and Backhouse, 1991: 31-33 (15); Evans, 1994: 109; Webster, 2012

[132] See Chapter 2: 116

[133] The question of whether the Sutton Hoo buckle was an object that could be functionally worn as a buckle or if it was a symbolic object is divisive within the scholarship. For the purposes of this study it will be assumed that the buckle was worn on a belt, even if it was done so only ceremonially, and would therefore have been viewed in that context. For more comprehensive arguments about the role of the belt buckle see: Bruce-Mitford 1978, 556-558; Filmer-Sankey, 1996: 1-9; Hines, 2010: 168-169

observation and understanding of the decorative scheme. The polished gold of the buckle would have glinted and shone when exposed to light, even at low levels. The variegated, textured surface (Fig. 3.24), marked by the rounded golden curves of the zoomorphs and the dark, niello hollows between them, would reflect the light from different points and at different angles. If the light source itself was moving at the time of viewing, either being provided by flickering candle, torch, or firelight, or if the bearer of the buckle himself was moving through the lit space, the effect of fractured light reflecting off the buckle would be enhanced.

This movement of light and reflection across the myriad planes of the buckle's surface would create a sense of fluidity, as though the shapes on the buckle were moving, rather than the light passing over them. This illusory movement would enhance the zoomorphic qualities of the ornament, giving it a sense of life and motion, which would further impact the complexity of the viewing experience. Thus, the need for the viewer to contemplate, giving time and attention to the buckle, does not negate the experience of a less considered engagement with the object; rather it offers multiple experiences that differ with every encounter.

While the type of ornament on a late-sixth- or early seventh-century disc brooch (Fig. 3.25),[134] found at King's Field in Faversham,[135] differs significantly from the decoration found on the great gold buckle from Sutton Hoo, the idea of patterns within patterns creating a complex visual experience is nonetheless readily apparent. This gilt silver-plated brooch with cabochon and cloisonné garnets can be seen as representative of a not insignificant number of similarly ornamented disc brooches,

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[134] British Museum, 1916,0211.1
[135] Avent, 1975: 159

with geometric pattern in garnet and filigree, produced during the sixth and seventh centuries.[136]

The brooch has four distinct fields of ornamentation with different patterns in each. The outermost field comprises a narrow circular band decorated with a pattern of grooves arranged in alternating numbers of five and eleven which creates the subtle impression of rings or hoops along the edge of the brooch in groups of four or ten respectively. The next band is slightly wider and interspersed with four rectangular cabochon garnets set equidistant from each other with the intervening spaces articulated by carved panels of silver filled with incised circles, which were originally emphasised by inlaid gilt. The inner edge of this band is lined by a beaded wire, which serves to frame the outer edge of that abutting it, a flat band of silver gilt. This is bounded by thin twists of wire, single on the inner edge and doubled to form a herringbone pattern on the outer edge, next to the beaded wire. Enclosed by these is a repeated filigree pattern of paired 'spiral hearts'.

Overlying the filigree and containing the pairs of spiral hearts are a series of cloisonné cells, alternately triangular and circular. These extend from a band of garnet cloisonné arranged in a complex geometric pattern of stepped T-shaped cells, half circles, and triangles. Between the outer bands and the central cloisonné garnet stud, framed by a beaded wire, is a band of plain, unadorned silver gilt. This represents the field on which the garnet cells and filigree 'spiral hearts' are placed, and so may have originally held a contrasting material, like shell.

Compared with an object like the Sutton Hoo buckle, the decoration of this brooch, while intricate, lacks the dense, apparently confused, and transformative arrangement characterizing the buckle. Nonetheless, it presents a precision and

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[136] For the corpus of early Anglo-Saxon disc brooches see: Avent, 1975; Webster and Backhouse, 1991; Blurton, 1997

intricacy of design that invites an analogous viewing experience. While a viewer's eye does not move along sinuous shapes, resolving them into recognizable forms, the multiple decorative fields formed by the different materials, colours, textures, and patterns similarly forces the eye to move from one to another. The entirety of the design draws attention first to one section, perhaps the cloisonné, but as the eye rests on that point, other areas, such as the more subtle filigree, shift into focus, leading the eye along the intricate lines and swirls of beaded wire to the gilt circles set into the silver of the penultimate ring, which draw attention towards the inset garnets. These, in turn, highlight the incised outer ring, and so on.

The decoration overall creates a sense of patterns within larger patterns which interrelate despite the seemingly discrete nature of each decorative element. In order to view the brooch, as with the buckle, a viewer must contemplate it, allowing the eye to move across the surface as the patterns resolve and dissolve and the whole becomes fractured parts, which then coalesce once again into a whole. In this way the purpose of the intricate patterns appears to be to encourage the act of viewing, the process of looking and understanding the complexities, rather than simply presenting a view of the whole.

This delight in the process of looking, in ambiguity, and the impulse to weave patterns within decorative patterns which take time and work to unravel seems to have been readily incorporated into the new media and image types brought about by the influx of Mediterranean culture and resultant conversion to Christianity. Yet they could also be explored within the more traditional media of metalwork. Thus the shifting shapes formed by the layout of the decoration of the King's Field brooch can been argued to evoke the symbol of the cross within the geometric patterns. Regardless of the orientation of the brooch, an equal armed cross as well as a saltire

cross can be discerned by focusing on specific aspects of the ornamentation. One cross is formed by connecting the smaller circular settings through the larger central garnet, while the other cross is discerned by connecting the triangular cloisonné settings, again through the central space. In this way the shapes that resolve and dissolve may become resonant with a Christian bearer or viewer but maintain their ambiguity and thereby their multivalency.

This traditional aesthetic, arguably the embodiment of centuries of Germanic artistic conventions, was readily appropriated into completely novel contexts. In the new Christian media, the carpet pages of Insular gospel manuscripts are often composed of brightly illuminated, richly patterned, abstract interlace which resolves into different patterns and shapes, often crosses, as a viewer engages with them. It has been argued that the design of these pages illustrates how the focus of the page is often buried beneath layers of pattern and interlace so that a viewer must actively look through the foregrounded pattern to see the symbol or shape.[137] Looking at the carpet page preceding the Gospel of Mark from the seventh-century Book of Durrow (Fig. 3.26),[138] a viewer might see a series of circles filled with interlace knots of alternating colours and a floriated shape in the central circle. Looking more closely, the central circle is seen as a saltire cross. Further viewing causes an equal armed cross to appear in the four red circles which surround the central circle, then two equal armed crosses appear in the yellow circles with the central circle as the top and bottom cross arm respectively. A similar optical puzzle is presented in the carpet page before the gospel of Mark in the late seventh-/early eighth-century Lindisfarne Gospels (Fig. 3.27).[139] Initially, the viewer sees a blue and yellow ground of interlace with framed

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[137] Pirotte, 2001: 203-204; Hawkes, 1997: 330-334
[138] Trinity College Library MS 57, f 85v
[139] British Library, MS. Cotton Nero D. IV, f 94v

panels of geometric pattern and more interlace set around a circular roundel. Further

viewing reveals four small gold crosses set around a central red and gold cross shape.

The gold crosses are set into a blue saltire cross which links through the border of the

roundel with the yellow interlace pattern of the background to create a much larger

saltire cross. The blue ground beside that yellow saltire cross resolves itself into a

large, ornate, Latin cross with expanded terminals nearly filling the page. In this

manner the patterns shift and shapes and symbols appear and disappear as a viewer

looks at the pages.

The complexity and multilayered effect of the design on such carpet pages

has clearly been designed to encourage the viewer to actively engage with the

imagery and contemplate all the shapes presented by it. The artists have created a

dense and complex visual maze, prioritizing the ground over the logical focus point,

in order to allow a viewer to decipher the patterns hidden within.[140] It has been

argued that this process is tied to the Christian idea of contemplation,[141] whereby a

practitioner is encouraged to use the visual (whether text or image) to consider the

complexities and paradoxes of Christian salvation in order to better understand and

engage with the nature of the divine.[142] There are undeniable parallels between

meditating on the nature of the deity in order to discover hidden truths and in that

process, come to a better understanding of those truths, and visually engaging with an

image to uncover hidden motifs, and in that process perhaps understand their

symbolic reference points. However, as demonstrated, intricate pattern and visual

nuance played a longstanding important part in Anglo-Saxon art, suggesting that the

impulse was adapted to Christian purposes and new media while retaining the familiar

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[140] Pirotte, 2001: 203-204
[141] Pirotte, 2001: 203-208, Hawkes, 2011b: 215-216. See also Parkes, 1997
[142] Brown, 1996: 147-161; Farr, 1997, 45-48; O'Reilly, 1998: 49-94; 1999: 159-211; Pulliam, 2006: 176; Hawkes, 2011b: 215; Baker, 2011: 101-106

role of visual puzzle that must be unravelled. This sense of resolving and dissolving

patterns stresses the value given to the ground of the image by Anglo-Saxon artists

creating a dense visual maze in which the viewer can find the hidden pattern,

regardless of whether the pattern is composed of traditional zoomorphs or geometric

shapes or crosses.

3.3a Enigmata for the Eyes

Looking beyond the visual, it can be argued that this interest in or enjoyment of

deliberate ambiguity and multivalent meaning infuses a wider cultural milleu and

encompasses a key aspect of Anglo-Saxon sensibility. Turning to the literature of

Anglo-Saxon England, similar aspects of puzzling and shifting meanings are found in

both the poetic verses and the riddles; they reflect a delight in processes analogous to

those involved in encountering the visual material.

In this respect, one of the most notable characteristics of Old English poetry is

the phenomenon of the kenning. The term itself is drawn from Nordic poetic treatises

as the practice proliferates in Scandinavian verse and sagas, and refers to a set of

vivid metaphoric terms.[143] Simply defined, a kenning is most generally understood to

be a compound word or short phrase which replaces a name or noun in which the

object of the metaphor is implicit but not explicitly stated.[144] The frame of reference

of a kenning may be straightforward, but it can sometimes be quite obscure and

therefore open to debate, leaving them, and by extension the poem's meaning,

unresolved.[145] Some of the more famous Old English kennings include: *hronrad*,

"whale road", for which the literal 'prosaic' term is "ocean";[146] or there is *banhús*,

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[143] Tolkein, 1938: 229-230; Gardner, 1969: 109-110; Jackson and Amvela, 2000: 24; Sauer, 2008: 234
[144] Gardner, 1969: 109-110; Sauer, 2008: 234
[145] Gardner, 1969: 109-117; Sauer, 2008: 234
[146] Jackson and Amvela, 2000: 24; Sauer, 2008: 234

"bone house", which means "body";[147] or *beado-léoma*, "flame of battle", which means "sword".[148] Kennings can be used individually or layered with other kennings to create extremely nuanced and evocative meaning.[149] For example, *banhús*, "bone house", can joined with another kenning to form *banhuses weard*, "guardian of the bone house", which is commonly interpreted to be 'soul' or 'intellect', and can be further layered with a different kenning, *lifes wealhstod*, "life's interpreter", again meaning 'intellect', to reinforce the idea.[150]

Clearly, the way in which a kenning is translated or interpreted will have a significant effect on the verse and the poem in which it is contained, making their understanding a point of contention in some instances. For example, the commonly accepted interpretation of the two kennings *lifes wealhstod* and *banhuses weard* in the context of *Exodus*, written in the tenth-century Junius Manuscript,[151] is "soul" or "intellect", but it has been recently argued that both should instead be understood to refer to Christ, an interpretation that significantly changes the reading of the poem.[152]

If the kennings in Old English poetry are meant to be multi-layered and complex ways to describe someone or something, it follows that there was a deliberate attempt, in their use, to invoke a mental image or way of understanding in order to arrive at an intended point. Using the example of *banhús*: thinking "bone house" leads to images of bones or perhaps specifically the ribs, the framework of the chest, and a house, built upon a frame, which shelters and protects; the term thus aptly

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[147] Tolkein, 1938: 229; Jackson and Amvela, 2000: 24
[148] Tolkein, 1938: 229
[149] Jackson and Amvela, 2000: 24
[150] Tolkein, 1981: 75; Irving, 1953: 98; Lucas, 1977: 142; Marsden, 2004: 144; Sharma, 2012: 188-189
[151] Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11; *Exodus*, Lucas, 1977
[152] Haines, 1999: 481-498; Sharma, 2012: 188-189

denotes the body as something that houses the soul, or the chest as something that contains the heart.[153]

However, it can also be argued that the kenning in Old English poetry is not simply used to lyrically or metaphorically replace a term, or paint a picture vividly in the mind of the audience, meeting the needs of alliteration and stress required of the poetic lines. Rather, it can be considered as a means by which to draw the audience along a cognitive path that includes *all* the associated connotations.[154] In this way, the poetic tradition of Anglo-Saxon England embraced a complexity, nuance and, perhaps most importantly, shifting sense of meaning which is directly analogous to that apparently invoked by visual perception of the art; it follows that puzzles and riddles would be readily embraced.

At its simplest, a riddle describes something or poses a question, with the implied expectation that the audience will respond. A simple vernacular riddle is also preserved on the front of the early eighth-century Franks Casket (Fig. 3.28),[155] where it is carved in runic characters, posing a simple puzzle which answers what the casket is made from: whale's bone.[156] The study of Anglo-Saxon riddles, most notably the approximately ninety-five examples collected in the Exeter Book,[157] which (whether by accident or design) are without solutions,[158] often centres on the relationship of Old English riddles with the wider Latin tradition of riddling,[159] or on solving the riddles, usually by scholarly consensus.[160] However, more recent scholarship has

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[153] Tolkein, 1938: 229-230; Lee, 1998:82-83
[154] Tolkein, 1938: 230; Greenfield, 1972: 36-37; Stewart, 1979: 115-136; Lee 1998:82-83
[155] British Museum, 1867,0120.1
[156] Webster and Backhouse, 1991: 101-103; Webster, 1999: 227-246
[157] There is some contention over the exact numbering of the riddles in the Exeter book and three different accepted numbering systems.
[158] Murphy, 2011: 1-2; Amodio, 2013: 258; Sauer, 2008: 27
[159] For a sample of the extensive scholarship surrounding the relationship between the Latin and Old English riddles see: Ker, 1904; Tupper, 1910; Nelson, 1975; Alexander, 1983; Galloway, 1995; Orchard, 2005; Coz, 2011
[160] Tupper, 1910; Williamson, 1977; Jember, 1988: 47-56; Wilcox, 2005: 49-59

focused on the form of the riddles and the processes involved in solving them rather than the solution itself, and has turned to those riddles that have resisted solution.[161]

Riddle 19, which contains groups of runes within the text, presents just such a problem, prompting several possible answers, including 'falconry',[162] or a 'light swift ship',[163] but none which fit it comfortably.

> I saw on a journey ·**sro**
> **h**· [horse], proud, bright headed,
> run very swiftly over the plain.
> It had on its back the battle power,
> ·**nom**· [man]. The ·**agew**· [warrior] rode
> the nailed one. The wide path carried,
> strong-flowing on the way, the bold ·**co**
> **foah**· [hawk]. The journey was the brighter,
> the course of those ones. Say what I am called.[164]

It is in this lack of solution that the riddles begin to take on more complexity, suggesting that they were not intended for such a straightforward purpose. Indeed, a number of the riddles contain paradoxical elements that seem designed expressly to confuse and engage the audience.[165] The use of the runes in Riddle 19 add a secondary puzzle, integrated and necessary to the understanding of the text, which must be solved before the riddle itself can be resolved. However, making sense of the runes within the riddle takes several levels of reading, needing to be read phonetically and in reverse order before the words are clear,[166] further complicating the experience of understanding it.

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[161] Murphy, 2011; Neville, 2007; Lendinara, 1981: 73-91

[162] Williamson, 1977: 186-192; Fry, 1981: 23

[163] Griffith, 1992: 16-17; Bitterli, 2009: 89; Murphy, 2011: 65

[164] Ic on siþe seah · ᛋ ᚱ ᛗ ᚻ· hygewloncne, heafodbeorhtne, swiftne ofer sælwong swiþe þrægan. Hæfde him on hrycge hildeþryþe · ᚾ ᛗ ᛗ· nægledne rad· ᚠ ᚷ ᛖ ᚹ· Widlast ferede rynestrong on rade rofne · ᚳ ᛗ ᚠ ᚪ ᚻ· For wæs þy beorhtre, swylcra siþfæt. Saga hwæt ic hatte. (Williamson, 1977: 78, 186; Symons, 2013)

[165] Green and Pepicello, 1978: 5; Murphy, 2011: 10

[166] Eliason, 1952: 553-554; Dewa, 1995: 29; Bitterli, 2009: 7; Symons, 2013

Riddle 13 contains one of the more mystifying of these paradoxes which continues to be interpretively problematic despite the accepted solution of 'newly hatched chicks'.[167]

> I saw walking on the ground ten in all:
> six brothers and their sisters together.
> They had living spirits. Skins hung clear
> and visible on the wall of the hall
> of each one of them. Nor was it to any of them worse,
> nor was his side the more painful,
> although deprived of their garment and wakened by the might
> of the guardian of heavens, they are compelled to tear with their mouths
> the grey fruit. Clothing will be renewed for those
> who previous to their coming allowed their trappings
> to lie on the path, to depart and tread the earth.[168]

The paradox lies in the phrase "*ne siðe þy sarre*" which translates as "nor was his side the more painful."[169] The poem describes a creature which sheds its skin but feels no pain, however the specific mention of the side leaves the audience perplexed.[170]

The lack of clear solutions, as well as the seeming obstacles placed in the way of resolving many of them, suggests that the value of the riddles may have lain more in the process of answering than in the answers themselves. It can be argued that in the process of 'solving' the riddle the audience is forced to examine and interpret the imagery presented, mentally proposing and rejecting possible solutions along the way.[171] In following the path of the riddle, it is often the case that the audience may perceive a deeper commentary on social, political, or even spiritual matters.[172] In the process of 'solving' the riddle the audience is forced to examine and interpret the

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[167] Williamson, 1977: 170; Bitterli, 2009: 19; Murphy, 2011: 55-56
[168] Ic seah turf tredan, *X* wæron ealra, *VI* gebroþor ond hyra sweostor mid; hæfdon feorg cwico. Fell hongedon sweotol ond gesyne on seles wæge anra gehwylces. Ne wæs hyra ængum þy wyrs, ne **siðe þy sarre,** þeah hy swa sceoldon reafe birofene, rodra weardes meahtum aweahte, muþum slitan haswe blede. Hrægl bið geniwad þam þe ær forðcymene frætwe leton licgan on laste, gewitan lond tredan. (Williamson, 1977: 86; Murphy, 2011: 53-54)
[169] Williamson, 1977: 170; Murphy, 2011: 55
[170] Williamson, 1977: 170; Bitterli, 2009: 115-121; Murphy, 2011: 55-56
[171] Neville, 2007: 434-435
[172] Neville, 2007: 435-446

imagery presented, mentally proposing and rejecting possible solutions along the way,[173] to revel in the nuance and ambiguity that allows for multivalency and personal engagement with the material.

The similarities between these literary traditions in Anglo-Saxon England and the visual traditions of complex patterning are too striking be explained simply as coincidental or unintentional. The emphasis on complexity and layering, be it patterns overlying patterns or nuanced interpretations of meaning, suggests that it was the process of examining puzzles that the Anglo-Saxons found compelling,[174] perhaps finding more fulfilment in the puzzling than the solution or resolution. It is certainly an attitude that could be adapted easily upon conversion to Christianity, being channelled into the complexities and paradoxes of Christian salvation and the contemplation thereof. But, more importantly for this discussion, the incorporation of this unique aesthetic tradition also represents a point of reference and familiarity in decoration which was able to transcend the conversion and be adapted to suit new purposes and Christian meanings. These shared aesthetic considerations, common across different artistic media – textual and visual – comprise a thread of the familiar and the traditional that stretches across a period marked by significant change and upheaval, culturally and artistically, to form an aesthetic continuum of ambiguity that remained unchanging and which could embrace or be embraced by the varying articulations of State and Church. This continuum of aesthetic considerations provides a thread of tradition and familiarity, throughout a period of significant change and upheaval, culturally and artistically.

3.3b Animal Anonymity

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[173] Neville, 2007: 434-435
[174] Leyerle, 1961: 1-17

In light of such calculated and deliberate use of ambiguity, it is worth returning to consider the iconography of the ubiquitous 'anonymous' zoomorph. The pervasiveness of the motif in early Anglo-Saxon art strongly suggests it was deliberately used because of its anonymity: because it was ambiguous. As has been established, animal ornament in Germanic and Anglo-Saxon contexts was capable of expressing a number of meanings depending on how it was read and understood by a viewer.[175] The act of viewing dictates how the imagery is understood, but only for that moment, as returning to it may result in a different reading and therefore a different understanding. This multivalency and ambiguity of understanding was a long-standing tendency in Anglo-Saxon art, appearing ubiquitously in earlier Style I ornament,[176] and persisting (although not necessarily as animal art) into later imagery and context.[177] Given the widespread appreciation of 'riddling' in Anglo-Saxon society, linguistically, 'texurally' and visually,[178] it is possible that the anonymous beast was capable of carrying more than one type of significance: it may, in fact, have been intended to express variable meanings for different audiences that could change depending on the context within which they were being experienced.

This phenomenon can be clearly illustrated by both the complicated interlacing patterns and transformative creatures commonly decorating the Anglo-Saxon artwork.[179] As has been noted, the effect of things metamorphosing into something other is widespread in the decoration of metalwork in pagan Anglo-Saxon England. Flourishes on brooches or pendants become bird heads; wing tips become

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[175] Jesch, 2002: 251-280; Hawkes, 1997: 316-317; Gräslund, 2006: 124-129
[176] Klingender, 1971: 103-106; Leigh, 1984: 34-42; Shepherd, 1998: 84-89; Dickinson, 2003: 170-172; 2005: 154-158
[177] Hawkes, 1997: 333-334; Pirotte, 2001: 203-204; Gannon, 2003: 185; Ó Carragáin, 2005; Karkov, 2011: 25; Webster, 2012: 29-41
[178] Tupper, 1910; Nelson, 1975; Williamson, 1977; Alexander, 1983; Jember, 1988: 47-56; Galloway, 1995; Wilcox, 2005: 49-59; Webster 2012: 34-35
[179] See above, Chapter 2: 112-116

boars' heads; two animals confronting each other become a face-mask. An early seventh-century gilt-copper mount found at Barham near Suffolk demonstrates this vivification of ornamentation very well for present purposes (Fig. 3.29).[180] It has three unidentifiable beasts, crouched and biting their own backs. A thick border embellished with vertical lines frames the central motif. The lower corners of the pelta form transform into two predatory bird heads. Here, the zoomorphic interlace embodies shifting meanings just as it creates a shifting pattern.

When viewing sections of zoomorphic interlace it takes some effort and understanding of the style of the ornament to be able to decipher the individual creatures. An early seventh-century gold disc brooch held in the Ashmolean illustrates this (Fig. 3.30).[181] It has three distinct fields of decoration with an outer ring of interlace, divided into four quadrants by small decorative bosses. The interlace of the outer section is densely looped and serpentine, with two snakes entwined in each quadrant. The inner ring of interlace depicts four unidentifiable beasts interlaced though the legs and bodies as they each turn and bite their own back. The third decorative component is the four small satellite bosses and a larger central boss, all formed of white paste inset with small garnets. As with the buckle from Sutton Hoo, the brooch offers a multivalent viewing experience, shifting from complex lines and patterns into writhing beasts and back to sinuous pattern again. As it is being viewed, the pattern seems to be shifting, moving, changing as the eye moves and struggles to find another aspect on which to focus.

Returning to the ways in which such ornament would have been viewed by an Anglo-Saxon viewer, it is necessary to remember the context of the objects decorated by this type of pattern, when they were being worn or used by their bearer. Most

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[180] British Museum, 1984,0103.1
[181] Ashmolean Museum, AN1971.446

viewers would have seen the ornament at some distance with little opportunity to move closer and examine it in order to decipher it better. It is unlikely that the ornament would have remained stationary long enough to enable the extended viewing that is required to have the pattern resolve into readable images. Therefore, perhaps the initial reading of this pattern was intended to be the primary reading. At a distance, the zoomorphs are dissolved into a twisted mass of line, curve, and plane, looping in and around in complicated shapes. This interlaced pattern has the effect of conveying movement and depth created by the numerous twists and crossings of the lines over and under each other. This sense of movement, and perhaps a sense of mystery, is further heightened by the shine of the material, usually highly polished and golden or silver toned metal, if not always made of gold or silver, and often black niello to contrast. The shine and shadow created by the pattern in the metal would have been exaggerated by the interaction of light, either sunlight or torchlight, with the metal creating a sense of subtle movement and shifting within the pattern itself.

It must then be asked why the elements making this pattern, usually seen from such distance, were zoomorphic rather than geometric. If one was able to look close enough to make out the animals or knew they formed the pattern, a likelihood given the pervasiveness of zoomorphic interlace pattern in early Anglo-Saxon England, the sense of movement would have given life to the creatures forming the pattern, making them, in effect, a visual ekphrasis.[182] Although the representations are non-naturalistic, they are recognisable by means of their key signifiers and, in recognising them as motifs of living creatures, in some cases identifiable animals, a viewer is able to enhance and vivify the zoomorph, only schematically depicted in the art, in their

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[182] For fuller discussion of ekphrasis as a classical rhetorical practice see: Webb, 2009

mind by referencing their experience, either direct from nature or transmitted through stories.

This can be related to the oral transmission of stories in early Anglo-Saxon England,[183] characterised by their descriptive vibrancy, which often offer a reader (or listener) a rich palette of linguistic nuance in order to paint a picture of the sights, sounds and emotions portrayed in the poem.[184] The practice of ekphrasis is dependent on a close connection between words and sensory perception, so much so that the words evoke the sensory experience. It thus depends on shared attitudes towards the psychological effects of language, something that develops through a communal experience or common tradition.

In the light of this, it is worth considering the role of animals and the natural world in Old English poetry,[185] in the *Anglo-Saxon Physiologus,* which perhaps provides the best insight into such themes. Preserved, with a number of other poems, in the Exeter Book,[186] this forms a series of three short poems, each describing a specific animal; one dwells on land (the panther), one in the sea (the whale), and one in the air (the partridge). In "The Panther", passages of vivid description about the appearance, sound, and scent of the beast are interwoven with the story and moral. His appearance is described as "fair":

> full bright
> And wonderful of hue. The holy scribes
> Tell us how Joseph's many-coloured coat,
> Gleaming with varying dyes of every shade,
> Brilliant, resplendent, dazzled all men's eyes
> That looked upon it. So the panther's hues

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[183] Brown, 1991: 7; Davidson, 1993: 160 -161; Webster and Brown, 1997: 211; Orchard, 2003: 225-227; Amodio, 2004: 4-7; Niles, 2007: 53-58
[184] Webb, 2009: 1-2
[185] For more on the natural world (including animals) in Old English literature see: Burton, 1894; Neville, 1999; Williamson, 2011
[186] The *Anglo-Saxon Physiologus* is an Old English translation of a Latin exemplar but takes significant liberty in recrafting the content to suit Anglo-Saxon sensibilities. For a fuller discussion of the poem and its context see: Squires, 1988; Curley, 2009

> Shine altogether lovely, marvelous,
> While each fair colour in its beauty glows
> Ever more rare and charming than the rest.[187]

The sounds which issue "from the creature's mouth"[188] form "a melody of sweetest strains;"[189] while his scent is "balmy" it:

> Fills all the place—an incense lovelier,
> Sweeter, and abler to perfume the air,
> Than any odour of an earthly flower
> Or scent of woodland fruit, more excellent
> Than all this world's adornments.[190]

It is clear that the picture of the panther presented by the poem has little in common with the creature itself, but the immediacy and vividness of the description cannot help but cause the reader to see and even experience the encounter with the animal described this way. Given such poetic vibrancy, it is perhaps not irrelevant to consider the sense of animation resulting from the visual representations of beasts in the decoration of Anglo-Saxon art as evocative in an analogous manner. While the animals in the poetry, although non-naturalistic, are intended to be symbolic and evoke ekphrastic experiences, so too the animal motifs in the art, whether identifiable or not, were intended to function 'ekphrastically' to evoke sensory experiences in the viewers. As the viewers' own frames of reference are used to enliven and lend meaning and significance to the motifs, their experience of the art is given a sense of relevance and immediacy.

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[187] The Panther, ll 19-30: Ðæt is wrǣtlīc dēor, wundrum scȳne, | hīwa gehwylces. Swā hæleð secgað, | gǣsthālge guman, þætte Iōsēphes | tunece wǣre telga gehwylces | blēom bregdende, þāra beorhtra gehwylc, | ǣghwæs ǣnlīcra, ōþrum līxte | dryhta bearnum, swā þæs dēores hīw, | blǣc, brigda gehwæs, beorhtra and scȳnra | wundrum līxeð, þætte wrǣtlīcra | ǣghwylc ōþrum, ǣnlīcra gīen | and fǣgerra, frætwum blīceð, | symle sellīcra. (Stanburrough Cook and Hall Pitman, 1921) http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14529/14529-h/14529-h.htm (Accessed 27 October 2014)

[188] The Panther, ll 42: Swēghlēoþor cymeð, (Stanburrough Cook and Hall Pitman, 1921)

[189] The Panther, ll 43: wōþa wynsumast, þurh þæs wildres mūð; (Stanburrough Cook and Hall Pitman, 1921)

[190] The Panther, ll 44-48: æfter pære stefne stenc ūt cymeð | of þām wongstede—wynsumra stēam, | swēttra and swīþra, swæcca gehwylcum, | wyrta blōstmum and wudublēdum, | eallum æþelīcra eorþan frætw[um]. (Stanburrough Cook and Hall Pitman, 1921)

Certainly, zoomorphic interlace in particular, and general zoomorphic motifs to a lesser degree, are imbued with a sense of suppressed movement and vivacity. The vitality of animals would have been constantly reinforced by daily interactions in life in Anglo-Saxon England and this familiarity with the movement and life of creatures would no doubt have been imparted into the zoomorphic patterns familiar to viewers. That impression of movement would thus have been emphasised by the materials used, reflective metals reacting to flickering light on their surface. This specific set of circumstances would give life to the zoomorphs, regardless of how well they could be seen or identified. In this respect, the zoomorph is perhaps the creature most ideally suited to generate sensations of vibrant and sinuous movement, explaining its pervasiveness in the art.

Images of animals were seen to have great power which could be exploited as talismanic or apotropaic symbols on behalf of their bearer. The inclusion of animal imagery in complex interlace suggests that there may have been multiple meanings attached to the ornament depending on who was viewing, how they were viewing, and what prior knowledge they possessed, lending insight into the perceived power of these forms in this society. In this way, the meaning of the ornament and the way it is being understood by a viewer changes as the pattern shifts. The ornament carries one meaning for a distant viewer, who may see the interlace and read it as creating a sense of depth, movement, and mystery upon the surface of an object. That same viewer may see the imagery of animals emerge out of the pattern, depending on their prior knowledge of the type of ornament or their experience of moving closer to the object. Those animals might just as quickly disappear back into pattern as the light shifts across the surface. At the same time that the distant viewer is reading the complexity and movement of the ornament, a close viewer, or even the bearer, is able to read and

understand the meaning of the individual animals depicted on the object. Close examination and knowledge of the pattern causes the bird of prey, serpent, or anonymous beast to become clear within the interlace and therefore the symbolic meanings of those images can be understood.

3.4 Experiencing Anglo-Saxon Ornament

The first step in approaching early Anglo-Saxon metalwork is to avoid the assumption that the highly decorated and patterned objects are simply expressions of a society that appreciated the aesthetic of complex ornament on the surface of an object.[191] There may be minimal documentary evidence to explain what the patterns actually mean or why they were chosen, but the choices made in the material used and decorative program included were deliberate and served an important function as part of the object and what it was used for. The limited nature of the material record ensures that whatever conclusions are drawn from the artwork and the decoration about what its purpose was in Anglo-Saxon society must be, to some degree, speculative. That being said, however, it is still possible to recognise deliberate choices and preferences behind the type of decoration employed on a specific kind of object.

It is necessary to understand that, in Anglo-Saxon society, there was a tangible sense of importance and significance attached to the materials themselves, especially precious or rare materials. Wealth and treasure were prized commodities in establishing a place in Anglo-Saxon England well beyond whatever monetary value it embodied. Information about status and hierarchy were embedded in the aesthetic created by the traditional materials of gold and garnet. However, the decorative

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[191] Deshman, 1974: 31-32; Wilson, 1984: 10; Geake, 1997: 125

effects of personal ornamentation and therefore its transmission of information to a viewer were as dependent on its imagery as on its materiality.

The ambiguity of the anonymous zoomorphs and geometric shapes, which create the most intricate and visually confusing pattern, enhances the mysterious and contemplative nature in viewing them. There is no way to identify the creatures or understand the shapes and there is no need to so do: the pattern and the way it moves becomes the primary focus. However, the pattern is not without meaning and purpose beyond aesthetically pleasing decoration. This artistic tendency, to utilise symbolic imagery in apotropaic and talismanic ways, and to delight in ambiguous and spatially disconcerting pattern, persists throughout the seventh century and well beyond, appropriating and being appropriated by the late antique artistic conventions imported into England by the Augustinian mission as part of the conversion to Christianity.

Chapter 4 – Conclusion: Cultures in Dialogue

4.1 Iconographic and Material Persistence

The long period of Anglo-Saxon conversion provides an opportunity to examine two kinds of artistic persistence in the use of visual motifs throughout the seventh century and beyond. This residual use of what might be considered traditional Germanic imagery – despite textual accounts of the apparently dramatic cultural shift prompted by the successful conversion of Anglo-Saxon England – may seem to be something of a conundrum, given its associations with non-Christian culture. The idea that Anglo-Saxon art might continue using ostensibly outdated modes of artistic expression has been explained as evidence of initial inexperience amongst the craftsmen and artists utilising newly introduced models of visual expression, or of capitalising on the nostalgia of the patrons favouring the long familiar.[1] This, however, not only ignores the longstanding value apparently invested in the "antique" and the possibility, as Bailey argues, of the deliberate use of archaisms in early Christian contexts,[2] but also the technical skills of the craftsmen needed to perpetuate such presentations.[3] Instead of demonstrating an inability to create more explicitly Mediterranean modes of visual representation, the pervasiveness of the designs and the prominence given to long-established motifs in newer decorative schemes suggests a deliberate incorporation of a potent means of visual representation that superseded the socio-political and cultural changes of the seventh century.

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[1] Kendrick, 1938; Leeds, 1970, 9-13
[2] Bailey, 1992: 31-41
[3] Coatsworth & Pinder, 2002: 157-178

4.1a Iconography: What remains

The early Germanic imagery which endures through the extended period of these shifts can in fact be considered as demonstrating such artistic persistence in two distinct ways: one which involves the use of traditional motifs that remain distinct, but which are replicated and placed in a new context, often appearing alongside imagery more comfortably designated as Mediterranean-influenced or Christian; and one that combines or fuses these motifs with the new modes of representation. Considered in this way, the art of the seventh, and to lesser degree the beginning of the eighth century, reflects a dialogue between the vernacular artistic style associated with Germanic traditions and the more classical, Mediterranean style associated with Christian and late antique sensibilities. Anglo-Saxon animal ornament persisted, providing a space open for ambiguity of perceptions between the traditional and the new which allowed the incorporation of seemingly Germanic imagery into a Christian context. Of the multitude of identifiable and anonymous animals that inhabit this early Anglo-Saxon art, only a few specific animal motifs can be seen as surviving the cultural shift caused by the Anglo-Saxon conversion to Christianity and enduring in new forms and formats.

As has been demonstrated (Fig. 4.1), the bird in Anglo-Saxon art could be depicted full length, or as an independent head, and it is always recognizable through the employment of a few identifying features: the eyes, the beak, and, if the image is full length, the wings and claws.[4] Predatory birds, characterised by these features, were depicted on a wide assortment of objects. They appear on armament, usually in the form of a shield mount; on personal and high-status jewellery worn by both men and women, decorating brooches and pendants and appearing at the edges of buckles and clasps; and on "household" objects such as drinking horns and musical instruments. In the form of bird heads they could also be worked into

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[4] See Chapter 2: 85-88

complex patterns, often including other zoomorphs. The meaning or purpose of the image of a bird in early Anglo-Saxon contexts is a point of on-going discussion,[5] but what is important to note in this respect is that they are, with few exceptions, nearly always indistinguishable from one another. There are rarely any identifying features such as colouration, feather types, or wing profiles which could be used to suggest eagle rather than buzzard, falcon, or hawk. The specificity of birds was clearly important to the nuanced meaning of the poetry and literature,[6] but the same does not seem to hold true to visual representation where the bird types are relatively undifferentiated, apart from whatever artistic license is taken. This lack of specification suggests that the impact or potency of the motif lies in the idea of bird, rather than in any association with a specific bird known in life or legend.

Having said this, it is clear that birds of various types did feature in the stories relating to the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons suggesting they were identified as sites of contention. The predatory bird had a strong presence in Germanic legends,[7] being associated with Odin, thought to be the Norse god and thought to be the equivalent of Anglo-Saxon Woden.[8] Ravens appear as one part of the 'beasts of battle', either anticipating the forthcoming feast before the fighting, or relishing the freshly-slain bodies after the battle.[9] This aspect of the raven, as scavenger, was also reflected in Christian contexts, in literary accounts and illustration of the Flood.[10] Eagles were also associated with both Odin (and likely therefore, Woden) and the

[5] See, for example, Hicks, 1986: 153-165; Hicks, 1993, Henderson, Speake, 1980: 65-76; Wickham-Crowley: 1992, 48-49; Davidson, 1965: 25; Hawkes, 1997: 317
[6] Lacey, 2013; Chapter 2: 94-97
[7] See Chapter 2: 88-89
[8] Davidson, 1989: 1; 1993: 47. See also Davidson, 1993: 58-60; Kershaw, 2000: 74; Lindow, 2002: 186-188
[9] There is an extensive bibliography for the appearance of the 'beasts of battle' in Old English literature. For further discussion see: Magoun, 1955; Bonjour, 1957; Griffith, 1993; Honegger, 1998; Jesch, 2002; Amodio, 2004; Harris, 2007; and Lacey, 2013; 2014
[10] Genesis 8:7. See also the illustrations in Oxford, Bodlian Library, Junius 11: 66, 68

beasts of battle,[11] and they also had a long history in Mediterranean culture as symbols of

Imperial rule, and as the symbol of John the Evangelist in Christian contexts – which also

included the dove as the symbol of the Holy Spirit.[12]

In addition, birds were invoked to enact the meeting of the two competing cultures and

their associated belief systems in eighth-century literary accounts of the conversion. In Bede's

Historia Ecclesastica, the discussion between Edwin's nobles and advisors, including the

pagan priest, Coifi,[13] includes an account by one of the counsellors of the flight of a sparrow

on a tempestuous winter night, which finds brief respite by flying through the warmth and

light of the hall but moves quickly back out into the night. The subtext of this implies the role

of birds as omens in Germanic culture,[14] but the way Bede constructs this narrative has been

demonstrated to depend on Psalm 83,[15] where similar analogies are made about the shortness

of man's earthly life and the uncertainty of what comes after.[16] In context, the speech inspires

Coifi's conversion and subsequent zealous anti-pagan activities.[17] Augury as a Germanic, non-

Christian, and thereby ineffective and suspect cultural practice also underlies the anonymous

Vita Gregori Magni, written in Whitby between 704 and 714 AD,[18] which relates how the

croaking of a crow interrupts the King's progress to his baptism in York in 627. Paulinus

[11] Davidson, 1993: 20, 70-77; Lindow, 2002: 186-188

[12] The Christian use of the dove first appears at Jesus' baptism, Matt. 3:16, Mark 1:10, Luke 3:22, John 1:32-34. The symbolism is developed through patristic and exegetical writings such as Augustine, *De Baptismo contra Donatistas libri viii*; Isidore, *Etymologiae*; Jerome, *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum*; *Physiologus* and Tertullian, *De Baptismo*. For fuller discussion of this symbolism see Ramirez, 2006: 31-40. The eagle is featured in both the Old and New Testaments but is associated with the evangelist symbols in patristic writing such as Augustine, *De consensu Evangelistarum libri vi*; *Tractatus in Evangelium Iohannis*; Iranaeus, *Adversus haereses* and Jerome, *Adversus Iouinianum*. For fuller discussion of this symbolism see Ramirez, 2006: 91-94.

[13] Bede, *HE* II.13 (Colgrave & Mynors, 1969: 182-187)

[14] Meaney, 1992 ; Davidson, 1993: 137; North, 1991 ,119–20; 1997: 174; Lacey, 2013: 143-153; Poole & Lacey, 2014: 403

[15] Fry, 1979: 194-196; Meaney, 1985: 22-23; Page, 1995: 110-111; North, 1997: 179; Toswell, 2000; Church 2008: 175; Lacey, 2013: 173-174

[16] Lacey, 2013: 168

[17] Bede, *HE* II.13 (Colgrave & Mynors, 1969: 182-187); North 1997, 167; Church 2008: 174-175; Lambert, 2010; pers. com with Eric Lacey

[18] Colgrave, 1968: 48

orders the bird, which he explicitly identifies with augury, to be killed, proving its lack of

foreknowledge and thereby the uselessness of such practices.[19]

It is, however, in Bede's exegetical writing *On Genesis* that the clearest picture of the

religious (and by extension cultural) contentiousness of birds in conversion era Anglo-Saxon

England can be found. In the telling of the story of Noah and the flood,[20] Bede highlights the

difference in behaviour between the scavenging raven and the dove, which diligently goes

forth, and returns to Noah as instructed.[21] There is an extensive scholarship on the word

choice, philology and influences on Bede's version of the story,[22] but his interpretation of the

behaviour of the two birds makes it clear that the dove stands for those living in the embrace

of the Church,[23] while the raven represents those who have heard Christ's teachings but persist

in revelling in the dark and sordid world of earthly delights,[24] perhaps implying Bede's

perception of the stubborn pagan or apostate rulers who resisted and rejected conversion to

Christianity. It is a comparison that might be interpreted as a commentary on the two cultures

still in dialogue in the eighth century: Germanic tradition, which ultimately fails, and

Mediterranean Christianity, which Bede saw as offering a future to the Anglo-Saxons.

However the literary focus on the type of bird, with the eagle and dove being claimed

for Christianity while ravens and crows remained traditional and arguably pagan, suggests the

specification of the bird is exactly what made it a subject fraught with partisan associations.

By contrast, the lack of visual differentiation in the image of a predatory bird, its very

anonymity, could allow it to be utilised in new (Christian) decorative schemes without the old

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[19] *V. Greg.* 15 (Colgrave, 1968: 98-99); North, 1997: 167; Lambert, 2010
[20] Genesis 8:6-12
[21] Bede, *Gen* II.8:7 (Kendall, 2008: 194-195); Ramirez, 2006; 73-78
[22] See e.g.: Wright, 2012: 121-171; Franklin, 2003: 3-18; Scheil, 2004: 195-203; Marsden, 2004: 69-90; Remley, 1996; Burchmore, 1985: 117-144; and Ramirez, 2006: 65-73
[23] Twining, 1885: 183; Whittick, 1960: 234-235; Ferguson: 1959: 15-16; Wittkower, 1977; 91; Milburn, 1988: 32, 36-37, 41; Jensen, 2008: 18;
[24] Lacey, 2013: 211-220

religious or supernatural associations. As a result, the form remains fundamentally Germanic

and traditional regardless of any new connotations that are being invoked. Thus, at the turn of

the eighth century, bird heads feature in manuscripts, as embellishments to the words of the

gospels. The *c.* 700 CE Durham Gospel manuscript (Fig. 4.2), [25] for instance, illustrates a

small capital, the letter "M" in *Magnificat*,[26] as two addorsed bird heads forming flourishes at

the end of the letter terminals. The birds, although more naturalistic – with attention paid to

the eyes, which are given pupils, and making the beaks appear as if they could be opened,

with upper and lower parts – than those found on the earlier metalwork already discussed,[27]

are still clearly predatory, with large round eyes and a sharp, curved beak. Likewise,

abstracted but recognisably predatory birds articulated by the traditional signifiers of curved

beak, round eye, and sharp talons, proliferate in the pages of the Lindisfarne Gospels currently

dated to between 698 and 721.[28] For example, four interlaced birds are set into the crossing of

the elaborate initial at the *Liber generationis* page opening the Gospel of Matthew (Fig.

4.3).[29] In the eighth-century Lichfield Gospels, stylised birds form a dense, undulating visual

field both within the borders of the cross and filling the space around it on the Luke carpet

page (Fig. 4.4).[30] Elsewhere the key signifiers of the Germanic type predatory bird, curved

beak, round eye and teardrop shaped wing to name just a few, are utilised for the eagle of John

with varying degrees of abstraction or naturalism.[31] This can be seen, for example in the

somewhat naturalistic representation of John's eagle in the late seventh-century Echternach

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[25] Durham Cathedral Library: MS.A.ii.17 f.71v. Alexander, 1978: no 10; De Hamel, 1986: 21
[26] Luke 1:46
[27] See Chapter 2: 85-97
[28] London: British Library, Cotton MS Nero D.IV (Alexander, 1978: 48, cat. no. 20); Backhouse, 1981: 7-13; Brown, 1989: 152-153; 2003: 7, 92-93; Nees, 2003: 340-343; Rollason, 2003: 148-149; but especially Gameson, 2013
[29] Lindisfarne, f 27r
[30] Lichfield Cathedral Library Ms 1: 220
[31] For further discussion of the role of the predatory bird as evangelist symbol see Baker, 2012

Gospels, now in the collection of France's Bibliothèque Nationale (Fig. 4.5),[32] which maintains the stylised and schematic signifiers as an improbably curved beak, large round eye, and teardrop shaped wing, but cloaks its Germanic form in more realistic colouration, attention to the details of the feathers and naturalistic talons. In contrast to the 'naturalism' of the Echternach eagle of John is the far more abstracted eagle in the Book of Durrow (Fig. 4.19), which displays the key signifiers of a Germanic predatory bird as well as an unnatural pose, impossible colouration, and a extremely schematic head.

The component forms that signify the motif as bird to a viewer are all features that derive from observation of a bird, particularly a predatory bird, and can therefore be observed as characteristic in eagles, however the manner in which they have been rendered has been highly stylised, schematic, and resilient regardless of the degree of naturalism or abstraction in the portrayal. The persistence of the image of a bird, characterised by the key signifiers that had been utilised for centuries, and which were thus familiar and evocative of the essence and power of the predatory bird, clearly persisted alongside the more overt Christian imagery with which it was incorporated rather than being supplanted by a more Mediterranean depiction in line with the other new iconographies. The predatory bird, therefore, was deemed able to make the transition to Christian iconography, with revised Christian interpretations, maintaining something of the meaning or power that it held as a traditional Germanic decorative motif.

The iconography of the fish in seventh-century English art may also have been a point of cultural dialogue (Fig. 4.6), representing a meeting point of the two representative and

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[32] Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, MS. lat. 9389; f 176r. Alexander, 1978: 42-43 cat. no. 11; Bruce-Mitford, 1960: 97-108; de Hamel, 1997: 32; Brown, 2007: 11. For arguments about an alternate history for the Echternacht Gospels see Ó Cróinín, 1982: 352-362; 1984: 17-49; Netzer, 1989: 203-212; For full bibliography see Denton, 2012

symbolic traditions. In a Christian, Mediterranean context it is considered a symbol of Christ

due to an acrostic devised in the very early days of Christianity: the letters of the Greek,

ichthys (fish), was interpreted to stand for the initial letters of the words *Iēsous Christos,*

Theou Yios, Sōtēr, which roughly translates to "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior".[33] Both the

word and the image of a fish thus were used in early Christian art to indicate Christian faith

and Christ himself.[34] However, like other discreet zoomorphs, fish and more abstracted

aquatic creatures were a common traditional Germanic form decoration, often found as shield

mount fittings or decorating shield-like objects.[35] As noted, these are generally identifiable in

the art by means of their tails and fins, and are usually seen in profile or from above. The

extensive use of fish on shields, often set on the inner side, suggest that the motif had

important practical, symbolic, and protective meaning to a bearer,[36] and in a post-conversion

context it remained recognisable in form, although it became significantly less prevalent.

And yet the motif of a fish would seem to be one that could almost be expected to have

been incorporated into Christian contexts, given the well-established early Christian

associations with it.[37] Indeed, Goscelin's eleventh-century *Vita,*[38] purported to be based on

earlier accounts, recounts how during his travels around Canterbury Augustine was driven

from a village he later converted. While there initially, he had fish pinned to him and was

mocked and castigated as a Christian.[39] Although Goscelin's account must be regarded

critically due to the centuries between the account and the event it purports to record, it

suggests that early Anglo-Saxons may well have been familiar with the fish as a Christian

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[33] Augustine, *Dei Civ Dei*. XVIII.23 (Dods, 2008: 567-569); Schaff, 1859: 380; Hassett, 1909; Bagatti, 1984: 215
[34] Calkins, 1979: 5-6; Hinson, 1995: 131-132; Jensen, 2013: 50-59
[35] Dickenson & Härke, 1992: 27-29; Dickinson, 2005: 155-156; Herman, 2009: 13-26
[36] Dickenson & Härke, 1992: 27-29; Dickenson, 2005: 146; Herman, 2009: 13-26
[37] Ferguson, 1959: 18; Milburn, 1988: 30; Jensen, 2013: 17-18, 46-58
[38] Goscelin, *V. Aug.* PL (Migne, 1850: 80. 51-52)
[39] Goscelin, *V. Aug.* PL (Migne, 1850: 80. 51-52)

symbol. Despite this, examples of the fish as a decorative motif during the conversion period are inherently ambiguous.

Two buckles, both dating from the seventh century and discovered in Kent (at Eccles and Crundale), are ornamented with fish motifs and other traditional Germanic design elements and have been described as making deliberate references to Christianity in the transition period.[40] These explanations are due, in large part, to their use of the distinctive fish appliqué. The copper Eccles buckle displays a cruciform shape formed by a double-headed serpent biting a cross-bar, flanked by incised serpents, with the fish placed on the inner surface (Fig. 4.7). The gold and silver Crundale buckle (Fig. 4.8), on the other hand, displays the fish on the front, flanked by two panels of interlaced serpents; the longstanding association of the image of a fish with Christ and this placement between two panels of serpents has been interpreted as a version of the Eucharistic iconography of Christ recognised in the midst of two beasts.[41] Thus, the Crundale buckle is considered to have a Christian function primarily because the dominant decorative element is a fish, while, more tangentially, the Eccles buckle is considered to be potentially Christian, at least by Hawkes, due to the Christian interpretation possible for the decorative elements on its front, the cross situated between serpents, rather than the fish.[42]

Against such potential references, it is necessary to recognise that a fish, as a symbol of Christ and Christianity, had not enjoyed great popularity in the wider Christian world since the fourth century, being supplanted by symbols such as the cross and the Chi Rho.[43] For the Crundale and Eccles buckles to be understood as reflecting deliberate statements of Christian

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[40] Webster & Backhouse, 1991: 24-25, BM, Hawkes, 1997: 323-324
[41] *Habakkuk* III 2-19; Bailey, 1996, 38; Hawkes, 1997: 324
[42] Webster & Backhouse, 1991: 24-25; Hawkes, 1997: 324; Dickinson, 2005: 156
[43] Ferguson, 1959: 94, 150; Steffler, 2002: 26-27, 68; Watts, 1991: 146-175

faith, and thus combining imagery with Christian frames of reference with traditional Anglo-Saxon vernacular decorative motifs, the fish as a Christian symbol must have retained its potency and immediacy for Anglo-Saxon viewers. Despite the apparent evidence of Goscelin's legendary account of Augustine's encounter with a fish, this might be considered debatable given the relative rarity of the motif in Anglo-Saxon art of the seventh century and its ambiguous placement, particularly in the Eccles buckle. Rather than claiming the fish motif on these buckles to be clear signs of Christianity and Mediterranean influence in the seventh century, they are perhaps better explained as deliberately ambiguous visual articulations, open to both Christian and traditional frames of reference in a period when cultural influences and affiliations were still in a state of flux.[44] Certainly, the fish shape, the elongated, narrow-headed, pike like form, would have been familiar,[45] and it is possible that the fish had a Christian resonance for many if not all Anglo-Saxons, even if only from the biblical account of the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and the fishes[46] which admittedly had an established iconography distinct from the invocation of a single fish.[47] In this context the use of a familiar zoomorphic form in an unexpected place, buckle rather than shield, likely indicates that some intentional disassociation and reinterpretation of the motif was intended. With both buckles the connection to Christianity is tenuous, but the use of the fish as a decorative focus in a non-traditional context, on a buckle, may suggest that it was being deliberately reframed with new associations.

In addition to these types of instances where traditional Germanic imagery is utilised as an independent decorative entity in a post-conversion context, there are also occasions

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[44] Hicks, 1993: 56-57; Charles-Edwards, 2003: 123-125
[45] Dickinson, 2005: 155-156
[46] Matthew 14:17-21
[47] Schiller, 1971: 165-166

where imagery with pre-Christian or potentially pagan associations was re-appropriated and incorporated within overtly Christian contexts. The snake or serpent is amongst the most prevalent creature found in early Anglo-Saxon art, outnumbered only by the unidentifiable, abstracted zoomorphs. Both are characterised by the long, thin, undulating form of their bodies and distinguished from one another by the presence or absence of limbs and joints. Serpents are depicted as interlacing either upon themselves, if depicted singly, or more often entwined and looping together; with rare exceptions anonymous zoomorphs follow the same pattern of use. It has been suggested that these intertwining, sinuous creatures may have been seen as apotropaic devices as well as vehicles of aesthetic delight,[48] but both image types are deeply rooted in the Germanic traditions of Anglo-Saxon art. The serpent has a somewhat tarnished image due to the characterisations found in Christian literature and it can be argued that these negative associations may have melded with traditional Germanic perceptions of the underworld as being the domain of serpents and corpses.[49] The ubiquity of the iconography in earlier Anglo-Saxon art, however, suggests that the serpent had a very different place in Germanic culture, one with positive connotations and welcome symbolic significances. Perplexingly, the serpent concurrently inhabited a positive role in Christian thought owing to Christ's instruction to be "wise as serpents and simple as doves".[50] The serpent thus embodied something Christian exegetes struggled to explain. As Augustine put it:

> Thus the serpent is used in a good sense, "Be wise as serpents;" and again, in a bad sense, "The serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety".[51]

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[48] Kitzinger, 1993: 3-15; Thompson, 2002: 134; Maleczek, 2002
[49] Davidson, 1964: 162; Thompson, 2002: 133; Maleczek, 2002
[50] Mathew 10:16 "prudentes sicut serpentes et simplices sicut columbae"
[51] Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* III.25: Ita serpens in bono est: Astuti ut serpentes, in malo autem: Serpens Euam seduxit in astutia sua. (Daur & Martin, 1962: 98; Schaff & Wace, 1899: 543); Maleczek, 2002; Meyer, 2005: 243-258

The inherent duality in the way serpents were perceived in Christian thought presents a puzzle ripe for interpretation among theologians and exegetes, but also a point of cultural ambiguity where the competing associations, Germanic and Mediterranean, can both be applied.

Given this, it could be argued that it was the serpent's innate ambiguity that allowed it to survive the cultural changes brought about by conversion to Christianity, and to proliferate within and alongside overtly Christian symbols and Mediterranean motifs. Snakes thus form part of the design of the elaborately illuminated capitals on a number of the incipit pages of the Lindisfarne Gospels. At the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew (Fig. 4.9),[52] the first three letters 'LIB' of *Liber* take the form of three beautifully illuminated, stylised, but discreet and recognisable snakes. On the incipit page of the Gospel of John (Fig. 4.10),[53] the 'I' and 'P' of *In Principio* invoke highly stylised, double-headed serpents. Perhaps more interestingly, the sinuous form of these creatures enabled them to be arranged in such a way that they become overtly Christian symbols, as on the western entrance to the portal of St Peter's at Monkwearmouth (Fig. 4.11), where their tails interlace to form a tau cross.[54] Cultural influence was not, however, all in one direction, with Germanic motifs appearing in Christian contexts, but went both ways. Two tiny, three-dimensional, gold snake fittings have been found as part of the Staffordshire hoard (Fig. 4.12a-b).[55] Unlike most traditional Germanic representations of serpents, however, these snakes, although clearly serpentine in form, are not depicted as looping, twisting, or interlacing with themselves. This body type is perhaps a response to the classical, Mediterranean traditions of image making, creating a more naturalistic body rather than a traditional means of depiction that prioritises pattern. Yet, one

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[52] Lindisfarne, f 27r
[53] Lindisfarne, f 211r
[54] Taylor & Taylor, 1965: 437-38; Bailey, 1992: 33; Kitzinger, 1993: 4-6; Hawkes 2003: 325
[55] Staffordshire Hoard, K128 (a); K1014 (b)

of the snake fittings (Fig. 4.12a), despite its more naturalistic body, still displays some of the

traits of the more stylised, traditional type of depiction, namely a disproportionate head and

gaping, beak-like mouth. The other snake (Fig. 4.12b), however, possibly embracing the

Mediterranean type of imagery more than its counterpart, is significantly more naturalistic and

proportional, so much so that it appears to be slithering across a surface. The adoption of a

more Mediterranean aesthetic into the traditional Anglo-Saxon medium of metalwork and

personal ornament or armament illustrates the continued contact between the two cultures and

the relative successes of the two artistic traditions.

The zoomorph, perhaps by its very nature as anonymous and enigmatic, was also able

to transition into later Christian usage and appears alongside Christian symbols and

Mediterranean decorative motifs. The beasts inhabit carpet pages and illuminated capitals of

manuscript pages, often alongside other zoomorphs, symbols and decorative patterns, equally

at home on the vellum as they were in the metalwork. For example (Fig. 4.13),[56] several types

of anonymous zoomorphs, both heavily interlaced and more discrete, nearly overwhelm the

tiny central cross of the carpet page before the Gospel of John in the Book of Durrow.[57] The

Matthew carpet page in the Lindisfarne Gospel takes a more subtle approach, filling the

dominant cross shape on the page with abstracted and interlaced quadrupedal, anonymous red

and green zoomorphs, surrounding small roundels bearing crosses in each of the arms and a

floriated shape in the centre (Fig. 4.14).[58] In considering the proliferation of zoomorphs

within and around the cross shapes on the carpet pages of such manuscripts it is worth

revisiting the argument made by Egon Wamers, that the use of animals and crosses was a

conscious representation of the narrative of creation in Genesis, and by extension the promise

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[56] Durrow, f 192v
[57] Trinity College Library: MS A. 4. 5 (57). Alexander, 1978: no 46.
[58] Lindisfarne, f 26v

of Christian paradise.[59] The anonymous zoomorph, however, as representative of a potent, traditional, Germanic motif, was not always seen in a positive light within contexts where more Christian cultural impulses were dominant. On the base of the late eighth-century cross shaft at Rothbury is a scene (Fig. 4.15), carved in relief, of six unidentifiable beasts, variously described as lions or wolves,[60] threatening three humanoid figures and biting each other. The scene is commonly interpreted as the Damned in Hell, where the deformed souls struggle with the monsters for eternity.[61] The use of the Germanic, anonymous zoomorph to represent the endless torments of hell – the future waiting for those who refuse to follow Christian life – must be seen as both deliberate and significant. The Germanic tradition is being set up as the opposition, and a truly grotesque and unappealing opposition, to the cultural values of Christianity in an unequivocally Mediterranean manner, in a narrative scene carved in stone relief.

It can be argued, therefore, that, within both the Anglo-Saxon and Insular context, such animal ornament was capable of being open to a number of meanings depending on how it was read and understood by a viewer.[62] The act of viewing and reading the imagery dictates how it is understood, but only for that moment, as returning to the same imagery may result in a different reading and therefore a different understanding. This multivalency and ambiguity of understanding was a long-standing tendency in Germanic art, appearing ubiquitously in earlier ornament,[63] and persisting (although not necessarily as animal art) into later Christian

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[59] Genesis 1:20-8; Elbern, 1986: 67-73; 1999: 81-90; Wamers, 2009: 159-162; See Chapter 2: 154
[60] Hawkes, 2011a: 236-238
[61] For more about the Rothbury Cross and the interpretation of the scene see: Hawkes, 1996; 2011b: 209-210; 2011b; Henderson, 1997: 156; Thompson, 2012: 152-154;
[62] Jesch, 2002: 251-280; Hawkes, 1997: 316-317; Gräslund, 2006: 124-129
[63] Klingender, 1971: 103-106; Leigh, 1984; 34-42; Shepherd 1998, 84-89, Dickinson, 2003: 170-172, 2005 154-158

imagery and context.[64] This ambiguity also makes such imagery preferred sites for dialogue between the competing sensibilities of traditional Germanic art and the newly introduced Mediterranean aesthetic and their accompanying cultural associations. Yet the continuity of decorative motifs and aesthetic impulses throughout a period of significant cultural change and a flurry of new artistic modes and media suggests deliberate choices were being made to maintain these traditional types of imagery.

4.1b Materiality: Metalwork without the metal

It was not just the traditional iconography and means of depicting specific motifs that became points of cultural transmission and dialogue in the seventh century, but also the materiality of Anglo-Saxon metalwork with its intricate complexity, delicate filigree, and gold and garnet cloisonné, which might be arguably said to derive from a Germanic sensibility, that significantly influenced some aspects of later, post-conversion art. As noted,[65] Mediterranean influence has been found in metalwork objects that conform to the traditional aesthetic created by gold and garnet, specifically taking the form of the cross as a symbolic signifier. The use of material imbued with ideas of value, preciousness and status within Anglo-Saxon society and the appropriation of a tradition for using those materials served a twofold purpose: first, it cast a Christian image type in familiar and traditional trappings, making it less alien and intrusive; and second it lent the traditional associations of preciousness and status to that new form and the ideas and cultural mind-set that it "symbolised" or represented. However this appropriation of the traditional Anglo-Saxon visual language was not limited to the use of new forms within the metalwork.

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[64] Hawkes, 1997: 333-334 Pirotte, 2001: 203-204; Gannon 2003, 185; Ó Carragáin, 2005; Karkov, 2011: 25; Webster, 2012: 29-41
[65] See Chapter 3: 171-179

Patterns and forms reminiscent of metalwork were used also to decorate carpet pages

and the borders of the evangelist portrait pages in manuscripts, for example, in ways that

recall the form, arrangement and techniques found in the metalwork.[66] The correlation

between the decoration of the Book of Durrow and that of contemporary metalwork has been

much discussed and it is generally agreed that the artists responsible for the decoration were

working from metalwork prototypes familiar within the Insular world at the time.[67] Certainly

the four evangelist symbol portraits are depicted in a manner akin to zoomorphic decoration

found on metalwork.[68] The highlighting of the joints of the Ox of Luke is a common practice

in traditional Anglo-Saxon as well as Insular zoomorph depiction (Fig. 4.16).[69] This is the

least ornate of the symbols and it has been considered more akin to Celtic iconographic forms,

but it remains the case that the detailing of the joints was also traditional in Anglo-Saxon

Germanic art.[70] The Lion of John (Fig. 4.17),[71] similarly closely aligned with Pictish art in the

scholarship,[72] also displays patterning on the body that is strongly reminiscent of Anglo-Saxon

metalwork. It is heavily outlined in yellow, suggesting the gold borders which enclose fields

of cloisonné (Fig. 4.18),[73] which in turn recall the red and green checkerboard-like pattern

filling the body. A similar type of cloisonné-like pattern fills the body of the Eagle of Mark

(Fig. 4.19),[74] which also displays the curved beak, round eye, and sharp talons of a traditional,

Germanic bird of prey. Finally, the Man of Matthew offers a highly schematic representation

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[66] Edwards, 1990: 152; Werner, 1990: 174-223
[67] Bruce-Mitford, 1960: 109-112; Henderson, 1987: 19-54; Edwards, 1990: 152; Youngs, 1995: 38
[68] E.g. Henderson, 1999: 42-46. The arrangement of the Evangelists and their associated portraits follows the pre-Vulgate ordering, assigning the Man to Matthew and the Ox to Luke, but the Eagle to Mark and the Lion to John. See Meehan, 1996: 43-44
[69] Durrow, f 124v. Henderson, 1971; 1982: 79-81; Henderson, 1999: 46-49
[70] See Chapter 2: 61-97
[71] Durrow, f 191v
[72] Henderson, 1971; 1982: 79-81; Henderson, 1999: 46-49
[73] Staffordshire Hoard, K273
[74] Durrow, f 84v

which has been described as bearing close resemblance to a highly decorated belt buckle to which a head and a pair of feet have been added (Fig. 4.20).[75] The body is formed from a single rectangular shape which tapers slightly inward and curves at the top (Fig. 4.21),[76] forming the shoulders, and it is outlined by a wide band of yellow filled with coloured cloisonné-like squares. In this way, all four symbols display elements that evoke aspects of a traditional Anglo-Saxon metalwork aesthetic, and they are, in addition, framed by borders of colourful, intricate interlace similar to the complex (zoomorphic) patterns found extensively on Anglo-Saxon metalwork.[77]

Metalwork-like decorative elements are also found on other decorated manuscript pages. The carpet page preceding Luke in the Book of Durrow (Fig. 4.22),[78] for instance, has a ground of red, green and yellow interlace bordered by rectangular panels of white and yellow patterns set on a dark backgrounds, which strongly recall panels of ornate, decorative gold filigree (Fig. 4.23).[79] Likewise, filigree type decorative elements can be seen worked into schemes as disparate as the decoration of a minor capital letter, (Fig. 4.24) as for example of the Lindisfarne Gospels, along with the capitals (Fig. 4.25) and bases of the architectural columns of the canon tables. Certainly, the inclusion of designs and motifs drawn from earlier vernacular (metalwork) art in manuscripts produced well past the end of the seventh century suggests that there was something intrinsic to the imagery that was being deliberately preserved in the (new) medium of manuscript illumination.

A similar borrowing occurred in the sculpture of the period. Decorated, carved stone was used in and by churches: for architectural purposes, guarding thresholds, elaborating and

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[75] Durrow, f 21v. Werner, 1981: 22-33; Wilson, 1984: 34; Laing, 1987: 12-13
[76] British Museum, 1939,1010.14
[77] Although see Henderson's (1999: 42) discussion where he suggests wider continental frames of reference.
[78] Durrow, f 125v
[79] British Museum, 2006,1001.1.d

articulating religious spaces for liturgical and ritual purposes; and for funerary purposes, marking and memorializing the dead. The designs (Fig. 4.26) incised onto the dressed stone blocks of the name stones,[80] dating from the mid-seventh to early-ninth centuries and almost exclusive to Northumbria, are cross motifs, often filled with interlace,[81] which associates the ornamentation with both the interlaced crosses in the carpet pages of the Gospel manuscripts and, by extension, with the tradition of interlace pattern on metalwork. The panels of interlace and checkerboard pattern on the Bewcastle cross also recall the filigree and millefiori components of high status jewellery (Fig. 4.27).

These carvings would also have been originally polychromatic, brightly painted to emphasise aspects of the design, possibly furthering the associations of metalwork by recreating the appearance of gold, garnet, millefiori, and enamel.[82] This inclusion of designs and motifs drawn from earlier vernacular metalwork in art produced well past the end of the seventh century suggests there was something intrinsic to the imagery that was being deliberately preserved in the (new) media. While this has been explained as a process of cross media carrying,[83] it can also perhaps be understood as presenting an unfamiliar cultural tradition in ways that would make it familiar and traditional.

However, the longstanding history of the Germanic visual motifs already imbued them with a level of authority and potency for Anglo-Saxon viewers. It could thus be argued that similarly deep significances were being consciously re-presented: their power, prestige and value associated with the elite metal artwork were being transferred to Christian objects in a context where the melding of two traditions, brought about by the importation of new artistic

[80] Peers, 1925: 258; Page, 1973: 130-135; Okasha, 2004: 92-93; Maddern, 2007: 1-2
[81] Maddern, 2007: 231
[82] Youngs, 1995: 37-47; Maddern, 2007: 3-5; 36-37 For further discussion of polychrome sculpture in Anglo-Saxon England see: Lang, 1990; Bailey, 1996: 52-54; Hawkes, 2003c: 26-29, Hawkes *et al*, 2008
[83] Cramp, 1965; 1984; Bailey, 1996

media, created new forms of patternmaking and decoration which reinvigorated them overall. This process has to some extent been explained in terms of the formation of 'Insular'.[84] In this respect, the artists were constructing an aesthetic and visual continuum that in part involved the re-appropriation of the potency and authority inherent in the traditional motifs. This suggests that there was something powerful in the images themselves, in the way of representing them, that withstood alteration and recasting to bring that potency to the new objects they ornamented and the ideas they presented. Furthermore, in utilising a traditional visual language strongly associated with metalwork, such re-appropriation also borrowed the connotations of value and preciousness attached to the very materiality of early Anglo-Saxon metalwork: its gold, garnet, and decorative fineness and complexity.[85] Using the material vocabulary of traditional Germanic metalwork to ornament Christian objects could thus be interpreted as a means of articulating the value and preciousness of what they represented, Christ and his church.[86]

4.2 Tradition in Transition

There can be little doubt that the collapse of the Roman Empire and the associated migrations of Germanic tribes produced a series of events that dramatically altered the cultural and societal landscape of much of Western Europe. The specific and collective responses to this historical cataclysm are too extensive to discuss here; however one specific aspect in the development of material culture relevant to Anglo-Saxon England was the proliferation of Germanic Style I in the fifth century.[87] Style I breaks quite emphatically from Roman artistic

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[84] See Introduction: 4-5
[85] See Chapter 3: 161-171
[86] Janes, 1998: 16
[87] Halsall, 2010

traditions, becoming more symbolic and abstracted,[88] and can be seen as a material response to the dramatic uncertainty and instability left in the wake of cultural collapse associated with the end of the Roman hegemony.[89]

By the seventh century in Anglo-Saxon England, what had been an innovative cultural response to the unrest of the fifth century, Style I and later Style II and their analogous forms in England, had become traditional means of artistic expression.[90] By contrast, the Mediterranean forms of cultural expression brought to England by the Augustinian mission and the push to Christianise the Anglo-Saxons would have appeared alien and unfamiliar. The growing popularity of Christianity brought a number of unfamiliar practices and cultural expressions into England over the course of the seventh century: literacy and written books; stone carving and architecture; new spaces for, and forms of worship. These changes were likely seen in some circles as threatening to the stability of Anglo-Saxon society. However, rather than expressing such responses by developing a dramatic shift in decorative forms, as seems to have been the case for the fifth century,[91] the Anglo-Saxons seem to have adopted a policy of entrenchment of tradition, both aesthetically and iconographically, that was powerful enough to be appropriated into more Christian modes of expression.

In this respect, there is an undeniable link between literature and visual ornamentation, both being the artistic expressions of a society. It has been established that, in early Anglo-Saxon England, the literature and visual arts express a shared aesthetic in the use of puzzles and riddles,[92] and the reinforcement of sensory experience.[93] There also appears to have been

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[88] Salin, 1904: 128; Holmqvist, 1955: 19; Haseloff, 1974: 1-7; Speake, 1980: 13-16; Halsall, 2007: 362, 382; 2010
[89] Halsall, 2007: 281-283; 362; 2010; 2014b
[90] It has been argued that it takes at least three generations (or two transmissions) for something to become solidified in societal consciousness as traditional. Shils, 1981: 15
[91] See Introduction: 5-7
[92] See Chapter 3: 195-200

a shared practice of using traditional motifs and means of expression. Within the corpus of

Anglo-Saxon poetry this resulted in a strong sense of continuity in the form and structure of

the verse-line as well was a deep interest in and glorification of the past in the poems

themselves, something intrinsic to the poetic genre itself.[94] Indeed Old English poetry has a

remarkably stable stylistic structure, sharing conventions with continental Germanic

vernacular verse, which lasted in the same form for centuries.[95] While there are a number of

explanations for this 'stability' of poetics,[96] it is clear that tradition was perhaps central,

gaining its own agency in the transmission of conservative, communal ideas.[97] If this is,

indeed, the case, it highlights the choices made by the composers of the poems to maintain the

traditional conventions.[98] Thus the stability and continuity of Old English verse, preserved in

manuscripts written around the year 1000, prompts a view of a rather static period of Old

English literature ranging from the sixth to the eleventh century.[99] Historical and

archaeological evidence, however, reveals a very different picture, one of significant

pressures, internal and external, and sweeping social and political changes that dramatically

altered the shape of Anglo-Saxon society and culture from over that period.[100]

Why then does the literature not reflect those changes? The conventional nature of

Old English poetics clearly had significant value in Anglo-Saxon society or it would not have

been perpetuated.[101] In effect, its use grants the poem an element of timelessness, tapping into

a long poetic history, and situating the poem, regardless of the exact date of composition,

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[93] See Chaper 3: 188-208
[94] Drout, 2006; 2013: 1-10; Tyler, 2006: 157-171; Trilling, 2009: 253-259
[95] Tyler, 2006: 1-2; 157-170
[96] Tyler, 2006: 5-6, 157-158. For discussions on the challenge of dating Old English poetry see: Amos, 1980; Fulk, 1992; Liuzza, 1994
[97] Pasternack, 1995: 19-20; Tyler, 2006: 4-5, 157
[98] Finnegan, 1977: 30-65; Franzen, 1990: Frank, 1993; Tyler, 2006: 5
[99] Tyler, 2006: 159
[100] Campbell, 2000; 22-24; See also the essays included in that volume.
[101] Campbell, 1938: 32-33; McIntosh, 1949; Fulk, 1992: 251-268; Bredehoft, 2001: 72-118; Tyler, 2006: 159-160

within established Anglo-Saxon traditions.[102] The resulting timelessness also offers a sense of ambiguity wherein the content and meaning of a poem can remain relevant to numerous social and political events.[103] Thus, as with the visual culture, the traditional Germanic verse structures could be appropriated to articulate Christian frames of reference, enabling its content to be transmitted in forms familiar to the Anglo-Saxons.[104] Traditional poetics therefore offered a forum, imbued with the authority of the past, within which it could shape the Anglo-Saxon relationship with its own past and in doing so help negotiate its political and cultural present.[105] This process of utilising the familiar and traditional to repackage new and unfamiliar ideas and forms of artistic expression can be seen as analogous to the response charted in the visual artwork of seventh-century England.

Through the course of this study it has been argued that traditional motifs have potency, whether used as counter to or in conjunction with new modes of cultural expression. Anglo-Saxon England in the seventh century is a point of cultural contact and dialogue between the existing, traditional, Germanic society, and the incoming Christian culture, imbued with classical tropes. Although this newly re-introduced culture was indelibly tied to ecclesiastical activity, the cultural dialogue was not simply one of religious conflict between Christianity and local belief systems. Throughout the seventh century contact with the Church was sustained and its penetration of Germanic Anglo-Saxon culture became increasingly successful. The intrusion no doubt produced a sense of societal and cultural uncertainty amongst a number of the Anglo-Saxons, creating a discontinuity between the perceived stability of the past and the shifting present and indeterminate future, and a response to the

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[102] Tyler, 2006: 159-171
[103] Tyler, 2006: 170
[104] Trilling, 2009: 64-124, esp. 121-124
[105] Tyler, 2006: 171-72

cultural uncertainty seems to have produced an entrenchment of the traditional artist motifs and aesthetics, along with their associated value systems. Iconographically, there was a continued reliance on the stylised, abstracted, schematic zoomorphic ornament that had proliferated in earlier centuries. The zoomorphic motifs were remarkably resilient, transitioning into new artistic mediums and being recast with new symbolic significance but remaining, essentially, in their original form. Aesthetically, the use of intricate and multi-layered patterning, be it zoomorphic or geometric, to create complex and abstract visual patterns remained a dominant component of image making, being reinterpreted within the new cultural context to suit Christian ideas and practices. There was also a continued interest in the longstanding use of gold and garnet to convey the sense of value and preciousness of the object. This traditional use of precious material as signifying status and symbolic value persisted throughout the seventh century and was simulated within the new media brought into the region by the Church. The cultural adherence to traditional means of visual expression is strongly indicative of the potency attached to the motifs and aesthetic, and imbues the cultural changes taking place with a sense of stability and continuity attached to the idealised past.

It can be argued that this persistence of imagery, and the resultant ambiguity of associations, was a deliberate choice, creating a number of meanings and interpretations which typified the cultural transition caused by conversion. This fluidity of cultural adherence, in essence allowing traditional Germanic artistic sensibilities to be used within and appropriated by a contrasting cultural context, is due in large part to the multivalency of the imagery. The schematic, abstracted Germanic art of early Anglo-Saxon England is a symbolic rather than representative visual language.[106] By its very nature it is ambiguous and therefore can be reinterpreted and recast with different symbolic associations than it originally had.

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[106] Hawkes, 1997: 312-318; 2003c: 266-278; Halsall, 2010

This multivalency allows for a reading of the iconography that is contingent on the viewer's specific set of associations. In doing so it allows for multiple different readings of the iconography, each dictated by the viewer's priorities and knowledge. The same image could therefore signify pre-conversion traditions and a connection to the past and to their ancestors to one viewer, while the same image might appear as a symbol of a past tradition embracing the new societal order, being part of a new and progressive future. Whatever interpretation is offered as to how the traditional imagery in seventh-century England was viewed by contemporaries, it undeniably forms a continuum of artistic expression from the Germanic past through the uncertainty of the conversion era.

ABBREVIATIONS

AEMS	American Early Medieval Studies
AFAM	Association française d'archéologie mérovingienne
Ant. J.	*Antiquaries Journal*
Arch.	*Archaeologia*
Arch. Æel.	*Archaeologia Æliana or, Miscellaneous Tracts Relating to Antiquity*
ASC	*Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* (Plummer and Earle, 1892)
Art B.	*Art Bulletin*
ASE	*Anglo-Saxon England*
ASPR	Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records
ASSAH	*Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*
BAR	British Archaeological Report
BMAG	Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery
CASSS	Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture
CCSL	*Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*
De Civ.Dei.	*De Civitate Dei*, Augustine (Dombart and Kalb, 1955)
De Excidio	*De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae* (Winterbottom, 1978)
DOP	*Dumbarton Oaks Papers*
DoR	*Dream of the Rood* (Swanton, 1970)
EAAR	East Anglian Archaeological Reports
EETS	Early English Text Society
Gen.	*On Genesis*, Bede (Kendall, 2008)
H. Brit.	*Historia Brittonum*, Nennius (Morris, 1980)

Habakkuk	*On Tobit and on the Canticle of Habakkuk,* Bede (Connolly, 1997)
HE	*Historica Ecclesiastica*, Bede (Colgrave and Mynors, 1969)
HER	*English Historical Review*
EME	*Early Medieval Europe*
JBAA	*Journal of the British Archaeological Association*
JEGP	*Journal of English and Germanic Philology*
JMH	*Journal of Medieval History*
JRSAI	*Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*
JWCI	*Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
Med. Arch.	*Medieval Archaeology*
MGH	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica (Scriptores Rerum germanicarum in Usum Scholarum Separatim Editi (SS. Rer. Germ.))*
MLR	*Modern Language Review*
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (*A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ser 1, 8 vols, trans. P. Schaff (New York, 1886-1890)
ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*
PAS	Portable Antiquities Scheme
PL	Patrologia Latina (*Patrologia cursus completus: omnium SS. patrum, doctorum, scriptorumque ecclesiasticorum. [Series latina.]* 221 vols, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844-1864)
PRIA	*Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*
PSAS	*Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*
RES	*Review of English Studies*

SMAM	Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph
TTH	Translated Texts for Historians
Rev. Arch.	*Revue archéologique de l'Est*
V&A	Victoria and Albert Museum
V. Aug.	*Vita S. Augustini*, Goscelinus (PL, 1850)
V. Boni	*Vitae Sancti Bonifatii*, Willibald (Levison, 1905)
V. Cuth.	*Vita Sancti Cuthberti* (Prose), Bede (Colgrave, 1940: 141-309)
V. Cuth. Anon.	*Vita Sancti Cuthberti Auctore Anonymo* (Colgrave, 1940: 59-140)
V. Greg.	*Vita Sancti Gregorii Magni* (Colgrave, 1968)
V. Wilf.	*Vita Sancti Wilfrithi*, Eddius Stephanus (Colgrave, 1927)
V. Will.	*Vita sancti Willibrordi*, Alcuin (Dräger, 2008)
VCH	*Victoria County History*
WAM	The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore MD
YAJ	*Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*

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