

**David M. Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry*. London, Thames and Hudson Ltd.; New York, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1985, 234 pp., 75 colour plates, 19 black and white figures, 22 black and white illus., \$100.00 (cloth)**

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photographs do contain a wilderness, but of a different kind. It is more gentle and picturesque, with images leaving the viewer breathless, transported to some idyllic spot. It is a wilderness from which one could return home for dinner.

Finally, one of the last chapters is devoted to that largest group of Notman staff, those photographers who will, for lack of any sortable records or documentation, remain anonymous. As might be expected, some of the most visually interesting photographs, and indeed the widest range of imagery, issues from this group. Logically, the further the images get from "the spectacular" (where we would expect to find appropriate documentation), the greater the risk that the names of the subjects and photographers are lost.

Perhaps William Notman's greatest strength was not his photographic contribution but rather his business acumen, to which Triggs makes several references. Notman's photographic empire, which at its height virtually covered Canada and spread into the United States, stands as a mammoth achievement.

The Notman Studio afforded his many photographers a wonderful opportunity in their day. Because of his efforts, photography, then in its relative infancy, provided a vast array of new images of distant, exotic, and as yet unseen places that enjoyed an almost instant popular demand. As well, his own portraits of notable personages and the quaint pictorial images of people in everyday activities are equally interesting.

Without Notman and Company, much of Canada's history might have gone unrecorded. Without Notman, we would lack many of the singularly spectacular events as well as the everyday scenes. A great portion of Canada's visual history is the product of Notman and his staff: we know people, places, and events because of their photographs. Their pictures range from heads of state to ordinary citizens, from landscapes in distant places to train-car interiors. Not much escaped their cameras.

It was a pleasure to have the opportunity to see the range of work done by Notman and his many associates, especially in the context of this newest and masterfully comprehensive effort.

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DAVID M. WILSON *The Bayeux Tapestry*. London, Thames and Hudson Ltd.; New York, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1985, 234 pp., 75 colour plates, 19 black and white figures, 22 black and white illus., \$100.00 (cloth).

In his preface, David Wilson writes that the glory of this book lies in the pictures, for its main purpose was to publish new, complete, and accurate colour reproduction of the Bayeux Tapestry. The opportunity arose during the winter of 1982-83 when the Tapestry was moved from the former Bishop's Palace opposite Bayeux Cathedral, where it had reposed since 1948, and placed in a new installation, the Centre Guillaume-le-Conquérant. While the embroidery was on the examin-

ing table, the backing was detached and it was photographed on both sides by Clichés Villes de Bayeux and the Sous-Direction des Monuments Historiques. The photographs of the presentation form the visual heart of this book.

The entire hanging is reproduced gloriously in colour, at slightly more than half-size. The original is about 70 metres long by about 50 centimetres high, which accounts for the 73 double-page and two single-page illustrations. The plates are sewn in small gatherings so as to open out flat and no part of the illustration is lost in the binding. Colour shift is minimal as the photographs were taken by natural light. The clarity of the printing not only reveals the slightly three-dimensional surface of the hanging produced by the laid and couched work in wool sitting atop the linen ground fabric, but also mercilessly exposes the tears, holes, repairs, and "restorations" of the stitching. It is now possible to compare the current state of the Tapestry with its earliest reproductions to ascertain the extent of the reconstructed sections. These illustrations allow scholars the opportunity to scrutinize details of the Tapestry at leisure, in a manner not possible while looking at the original.

The one great drawback to the reproduction is inevitable. The awkward size of the embroidery precludes an overview, with the result that even the two-page spread of the plates, each of which covers about 48 inches of the Tapestry, breaks the embroidery into arbitrary sections, destroying all perception of stylistic, scenic, or narrative continuity. In this remarkable work, representing the first time a fully developed and flowing narrative is rendered in visual form in an extant work of art, this is a major contradiction of the original. One of the unfortunate victims is the scene of Harold's oath at Bayeux (Plates 23 and 24), a scene that many scholars (*pace* Wilson) see as pivotal in the narrative. Here, the two main figures, William of Normandy and Harold of Wessex, appear completely disconnected, on separate folds. But while the scenic divisions of the Tapestry had to be ignored in the printing of the reproduction, certain tableaux have been admirably framed. Harold's audience with King Edward upon the former's return from Normandy (Plate 28) remains intact, and Harold's coronation as king of England (Plate 31) survives.

The problem of visual and narrative fragmentation is compensated for, as much as possible, by the reprinting of the smaller facsimile used in earlier Phaidon publications (Stenton 1957 and Gibbs-Smith 1973). But the truth remains that the only way really to appreciate the visual and narrative flow that is central to the Bayeux Tapestry's artistic uniqueness and success is to make the pilgrimage to Bayeux to see it "in the flesh."

The text accompanying the reproduction is aimed at both the scholar and the educated general reader. It is for the most part successful and informative, though perhaps not a major contribution to original scholarship. The book begins with a foreword by Jean Le Carpentier, the mayor of Bayeux and thus the officially designated guardian of the Bayeux Tapestry. After a short preface, the *Introduction: A Work of Art and an Historical Document* includes a description of the embroidery, a very abbreviated history of the hanging, a historical background to the narrative that identifies the principal actors, and an evaluation of the Tapestry as a historical source for the events it portrays.

The rest of the text is divided into five sections followed by copious endnotes and an index. Part I is a normalized transcription and new translation of the Latin text from the embroidery. It differs only in minor points from earlier translations. Part II, *The Commentary*, describes, interprets, and comments on the scenes in the Tapestry narrative. Part III, *The Story Told in the Tapestry*, focuses on key issues chosen by the Tapestry's designer and discusses the main lines of interpretation. The events leading up to the Battle of Hastings are outlined and the strategy of the engagement is discussed.

In Part IV, *Style, Art and Form*, Wilson turns his attention to the Bayeux Tapestry as an art object. He describes what we know about textile hangings in Anglo-Saxon England. In the subsection "What is it?", he summarizes the arguments for the Bayeux Tapestry as a religious document and as a secular object, opting on balance for the latter. In "Where was it made and when?", he discusses the characteristics of the inscriptions that reveal its English character. In the same section a comparison with other embroidery fragments is seen as leading nowhere, while a discussion of the enigmatic fragment of a relief sculpture from Winchester yields no help in locating the place of origin of the embroidery. Stylistic parallels to be found in early eleventh-century English manuscripts, especially Aelfric's Paraphrase of the Hexateuch, are cited as parallels for the narrative scenes, but most of the detailed comparisons made earlier by Wormald and Dodwell are described as "merely interesting and diagnostic." In "The origins and date of the Tapestry," Wilson comes to the conclusion that the Tapestry was created for Odo of Bayeux by English designers and needlewomen between 1066 and 1082. Its place of origin is identified as southern England, perhaps in the Nunnemister at Winchester or at the Kentish nunnery in Minster-in-Sheppey.

In Part V, *Buildings, Dress and Objects*, Wilson looks critically at the Bayeux Tapestry as a "quarry for illustrations of the warfare and daily life of early medieval people." Many other scholars have already used the Tapestry in this fashion, but he urges great caution and insists on using only actual remnants of the material culture to support the veracity of the Bayeux Tapestry's presentation of objects and equipment. After a fairly detailed discussion of the architectural forms depicted, Wilson warns that most seem to be represented through the eyes of artistic convention and cannot be taken as illustrations of real buildings. Only the depiction of Westminster Abbey, he suggests, must be taken more seriously. The author then moves on to discuss furniture and fittings, clothes, arms, armour and regalia, and finally ships. The text begins with the laconic entry in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle describing the Norman Invasion of 1066 and concludes with a description of the tall ships from the early eleventh-century *Encomium Emmae Reginae*.

In his introduction, Wilson calls his text an avowedly synthetic work with two or three new ideas. These ideas will be immediately apparent only to those who are conversant with the Bayeux Tapestry's vast bibliography. More than previous writers, Wilson compares the embroidery's images with material objects rather than with manuscript illustrations. His vast storehouse of knowledge of Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian archaeol-

ogy has been called into service and the same train of thought that produced his recent *Anglo-Saxon Art from the Seventh Century to the Norman Conquest* (London, 1984) can readily be seen. With reference to narrative models, Wilson discusses the possible relationship with the French *chanson-de-geste*, as suggested by Dodwell and others, and introduces the provocative idea of the influence of Anglo-Saxon battle poetry. This is an intriguing notion that one wishes had been developed, since it is suggested rather strongly and then dropped.

A number of other suggestions are offered to the reader without adequate qualification or substantiating evidence, such as the statement that the embroidery could have been produced at Winchester or Sheppey. His revival of the idea that the Turolde labelled in the messenger scene is the bearded dwarf serving both as a groom and also the artist of the Tapestry seems to me to be off hand in the face of the extensive arguments against just that conclusion. Another example of a cavalier reading of background material is the reference to "a Dr. Bruce" and a footnote quoting Fowke for this information. Rev. John Collingwood Bruce published a substantial volume on the Bayeux Tapestry in 1856 (reprinted 1885) that deserves its own citation. Another slight is given to Charles Dawson, a revealed archaeological forger, whose articles on the incorrect restorations of the text in the Bayeux Tapestry should be considered more carefully, in spite of his reputation. The brief history of the Tapestry provided in the book is adequate although the story is more colourful than Wilson indicates. Wilson refers to a mention of the Tapestry in 1463, but this citation (first given by de La Rue in 1824) cannot be verified. Some of the usual historical errors are repeated from other histories: Napoleon's reaction to the Tapestry and its 1803 Paris exhibition is romanticized; Gurney's error of locating the embroidery in the *préfecture* (which would have been in Caen) in 1812 when it was more likely in the *hôtel de ville* is repeated. Admittedly, these are not serious difficulties, but they reflect nevertheless a seemingly casual acquaintance with available documentation and secondary sources.

One of the thornier problems in these studies is the evaluation and use of the Bayeux Tapestry as an historical document. Wilson tackles this question with equivocation. Perhaps it is best to adopt his statement that the Tapestry has to be used critically and circumspectly. Wilson suggests that William of Poitiers and the Bayeux Tapestry are our best sources for Conquest history, but he ignores the fact that at many points they contradict each other. He also fails to explain how the idea of relating the Tapestry's narrative structure and conventions to a literary genre such as battle poetry affects the Tapestry's value as a primary historical document. The depth of the problem is simply ignored. He dismisses Eadmer's versions of events as "daft," which is an unfair and offhand dismissal of a possible source. His use of William of Malmesbury as corroboration for the Tapestry's account of Harold's death ignores the possibility that the later writer might himself have used the Tapestry as a source. In the end, I feel that Wilson has done little to cast light on the relationship of the Tapestry's narrative to its literary milieu and sources.

One major shortcoming is the manner in which the *fabliaux* presented in the borders are treated. To use Herrmann as the authority is outrageous; it would have

been far better to refer to the much more credible researches of Abraham and Letienne (1929), Chefneux (1934), Goldschmidt (1947), and Dodwell (1966). Although I do not take issue with the suggestion of Odo of Bayeux as patron of the Tapestry, this was not first convincingly argued by Fowke (1875), as Wilson states. Fowke took over the suggestion made in 1824 by De-launey. As well, Henry Ellis was not the first to identify Vital and Wadard as Odo's vassals. This had been done earlier by Amyot (1821). A number of points such as these reflect a hasty approach to the bibliography of the Tapestry. Wilson gives no reason to suggest why he feels the embroidery was acquired by Odo for Bayeux. As a transportable secular object, the embroidery could have been destined for a number of locations in Normandy or England.

These criticisms should not be seen as outweighing the valuable material in Wildon's book. Most of the shortcomings will be exasperating only for the small group of scholars who work directly with the Bayeux Tapestry and who will be struck by a certain hastiness in Wilson's survey of the past literature. This book is not aimed primarily at them, but at a wider audience. In the balancing act of producing a popular, yet scholarly, publication, this beautiful book must be considered one of the most skilful efforts.

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DAVID FREEDBERG *The Life of Christ after the Passion*, Part VII of *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard*. 26 parts. London, Harvey Miller Publishers; Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1984, 425 pp., 175 black and white illus., \$103.75.

This series is one of the greatest collaborative art-historical enterprises of the late twentieth century. It was planned by the German scholar Ludwig Burchard (1886-1960) "as the complete embodiment of our improved knowledge of Rubens," by which he meant bringing up to date the five-volume catalogue published by Max Rooses between 1886 and 1892. Burchard actually issued a prospectus for a six-volume work in 1939, but the Second World War and his perfectionist personality prevented his plans from being carried out in his life time. Fortunately, his notes were acquired by the City of Antwerp, which set up a foundation to oversee the project. It is a measure of the astonishing growth in our knowledge of Rubens that by 1968, when the first published volume of the series appeared (John Rupert Martin's work on the Jesuit Ceiling paintings) Burchard's six-volume plan had been expanded to twenty-six parts, many in two volumes. In that first volume, the hope was expressed that the project would be complete by *Rubens Year* (1977), but now, more than a decade later, only about one-third of the parts have been published. All volumes take into account Burchard's findings, but each is by a different author who is free to follow his or her own findings and opinions. Although

occasionally one author has written more than one part, the contributors represent a wide spectrum of ages, nationalities, and opinions among *Rubenistes*, and the overall effect of the diversity of authorship is to give this series a great sense of variety.

Dr. Freedberg's volume was completed by late 1978. However, delays in publication meant that it did not appear in print until late 1983. This must have been exceedingly frustrating for the author. Yet, as he notes, it did have one great benefit: it enabled him to take into account the findings and opinions published in 1980 by Professor Julius Held in *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens*. This monumental two-volume work by the doyen of *Rubenistes* is arguably the greatest single twentieth-century contribution to Rubens studies.

Yet despite his frequent acknowledgment of debt to Held's 1980 volumes, Dr. Freedberg does not hesitate, on occasion, to disagree with some of the views expressed in them. For example, Held identified the panel depicting an angel and the Virgin Mary, formerly in the Seilern collection and now in the Courtauld Institute Galleries in London, as the *Annunciation*. This was contrary to Count Seilern's view that the subject was really the *Annunciation of the Death of the Virgin*, which he based in part on the fact that the angel carries a palm rather than the traditional lily. Freedberg sides with Seilern, and quotes the passage from the Pseudo-Melito, which is the source for this rarely-depicted event in the Virgin's life: "Behold this palm branch. I have brought it to thee from the Paradise of the Lord, and thou shalt cause it to be carried before thy bier on the third day." Also, while Held describes the Seilern picture as "more a product of the studio than of Rubens himself," Freedberg argues that the Seilern picture is the "superior version" (there is another in Prague) and that the doubts about it are probably due to its condition (pp. 136-37).

Held's views about the quality of the former Seilern picture seem well founded, on visual grounds. On the other hand, Freedberg's point about the poor condition of the panel seems valid. The arguments about the subject-matter of the panel also seem, at first sight, to be equally balanced. Held argues plausibly that Rubens never gives the angel a lily in his other depictions of the *Annunciation*, and that the palm, according to Valerianus, is incorruptible and not subject to the decay of old age—"qualities that evidently apply in the highest degree to the Virgin" (Held, p. 441).

Neither Held nor Freedberg comments on the curious piece of furniture to the Virgin's right in the former Seilern picture. Although the Virgin is resting an open book on it, it is not a *prie-dieu*, since it is too low and has no sloping top. (One sees the usual *prie-dieu* in Rubens's *Annunciation* in Vienna of ca. 1609-10.) Instead, the object in the former Seilern picture appear to be a bed with lion-leg feet, *all'antica*. (A very similar bed-leg appears in Van Dyck's composition drawing in Berlin for the Dulwich *Samson and Delilah*, a picture of Van Dyck's First Antwerp Period, when he was in close contact with Rubens. Also, in Rubens's picture, the bed is on a dais and curtained, as seventeenth-century beds often were. A further point is that the rounded form of the lion-legs recalls the sarcophagi of Florentine *quattrocento* tombs such as Desiderio da Settignano's *Marsuppini Monument* in Santa Croce and Verrocchio's *Medici Monument* in San Lorenzo, whose "bath" shape derives from the antique